

BOOK REVIEWS

A. Brown and L. Woodhead, *That Was the Church That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016. Pp. viii, 255. Hb. £16.99. ISBN 978-1-4729-2164-2.

Some books are painful to read because they are poorly written, dishonest or likely to do harm. This book was a painful read because of its irresistible combination of honesty, clarity and authenticity. As an ordinand at Cuddesdon during the years which the authors describe, I can testify that their account rang painfully true. If they made the institution seem slightly barmy, well, there is a good deal more that they could have said. The purpose of the chapter on one particular theological college, however, was not parochial, for it set out the broader dilemmas of being a liberal catholic Anglican in the contemporary Church.

The great hope of Cuddesdon liberals was, of course, that Rowan Williams would succeed in reconnecting the Church of England to the people: 'It was easy to understand why so many people loved Rowan, and thought him the best hope of the Church of England' (p. 153). The death of this hope is concisely described in the chapter 'The Rowan Vacuum'. The authors fully recognise Williams's immense intellectual and spiritual gifts, but their account of his failure over Jeffrey John, his gaffe over the role of Shari'a law in Britain and his inability to manage church structures, is set out very clearly. There will doubtless be more detailed studies of all these episodes but it is hard to see that the judgements reached here will be easily overturned. Perhaps the most poignant moment in the book comes when a bishop, reflecting on the Reading affair and Williams's role, observed, 'I think he fell into a depression because he could not reconcile what he had done with the person he thought he was' (p. 169). As the authors point out, he never came close to understanding how much his opponents hated him.

If Williams is dealt with critically, then neither his predecessor nor his successor do much better. George Carey was 'out of his depth' and guilty of 'self-deception' (p. 109). He believed that bureaucratic adjustments, such as an Archbishop's Council, would turn an ancient institution into a functioning organisation. Disappointed in this hope, he retreated into a fantasy vision of the Anglican Communion. Justin Welby is seen as the product of a particular kind of privileged attachment to evangelicalism reinforced by the specific culture of Holy Trinity, Brompton ('HTB'): 'He did not think he was working for the Church of England at all [...] he thought he was working for Jesus. The Church of England was merely a vehicle' (p. 210). With his accession to Canterbury, the 'long march' of HTB had ended in victory.

One of the impressive things about this book is the way in which the authors combine a sharp eye for journalistic detail with an awareness of the broader historical and sociological trends at work in English religion. Running through the whole work is a sense that the Church of England has failed to grasp the significance of the pluralisation of life and the sheer range of spiritual options that are open in the contemporary world. Linda Woodhead's work in this area has been detailed and striking, but when she tried to engage Rowan Williams, 'he just didn't want to know' (p. 182). Anyone interested in the contemporary religious situation would do well to read chapter 4, as with their 'brief theory of religious decline' (p. 63), the authors give a thoughtful and convincing summary of some complex and often confusing social trends.

A key thread in the narrative is to explain how – with debates about homosexuality and women priests as the presenting symptoms – liberals lost their nerve, Anglo-Catholics lost their fight over the role of women, and evangelicals of the HTB-type moved from the margins to the centre, and in the person of Justin Welby, may be said to have triumphed in the game of episcopal thrones. Nonetheless, this book is neither malicious nor cynical and it would be wrong to dismiss it as gossip tinged with rancour. The authors have a positive vision of what the Church could be, but it must reconnect positively with the spiritual aspirations of the English people. They observe that 'the most tragic loss during the decades of decline charted in this book' was that millions of ordinary

Anglicans 'were squeezed out by structures and stalling' (p. 214). It may not be entirely clear what the authors mean by a return to 'the exuberant incoherence' of earlier times (p. 221), but they are surely right to think that the Church of England needs to turn from contemplating its own structures to the needs of the wider community. The concrete example that they offer is the relatively stronger appeal which the Scandinavian state churches continue to have.

This is not an optimistic book, but its appearance is to be welcomed because honest hope may only be found when the darkest and hardest truths are faced. This is a book of hard truths, especially for those who still identify as liberal catholics. Only the foolish will seek to evade its challenge by a superficial dismissal of its evidence and arguments.

King's School, Worcester

Mark Dorsett

D. M. Hoyle, *The Pattern of Our Calling: Ministry Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. London: SCM Press, 2016. Pp. xvi, 192. Pb. £25. ISBN 978-0-334-05472-6.

David Hoyle, recently appointed as dean of Westminster, has written a book on priesthood which is rather different to the usual run of these things. I say a book on priesthood advisedly, as despite the subtitle speaking of 'ministry', this is very much a book about ordained ministry, and primarily about specifically priestly ministry. I imagine that this focus stems from its having grown out of lectures to ordinands and ordination retreat addresses: it has something of that flavour, and one can imagine it being a key textbook on ordination courses for decades to come.

The difference with this book is that rather than giving a list of things that clergy do, or a list of what the clergy should be, Hoyle presents what is effectively an extended literature review of writing on priesthood. Hoyle's first love is history, and he displays a breadth and depth of knowledge not just of what was being written at various points in history, but why. In the space of a few pages, for example, discussion of the priesthood of all believers moves from the *Didache* to Charles Gore, to Robin Greenwood. Hoyle well balances a kindly and generous explanation of how each writer on whom he focuses was formed by

and reacting to their own historical context, with a similarly generous and insightful critique of their limitations and ways in which an uncritical reading of some of these emphases can be and has been unhelpful.

However, this degree of insight and awareness serves to point up the almost unrelenting maleness of the examples that Hoyle chooses, always a danger with a historical 'great thinkers' approach. The short section on women's ministry is both supportive and subtle in its awareness of how male our history has been – which makes it frustrating that this awareness did not translate into a more expansive set of examples of thinking on ministry. The only female theologians who are quoted are to be found in this brief section on the ordination of women.

The Pattern of Our Calling could be characterised as part of the growing body of literature that is critical of the new management and leadership emphasis of the contemporary Church of England, but it is more subtle than this. Hoyle is certainly critical of an over-emphasis on success and numerical church growth, but he also recognises some of the urgency that has prompted this modern emphasis, and some of the ways in which it has been a helpful corrective to errors of the past. He helpfully brings the clarity of his historical perspective to demonstrate that emphases in ministry have always changed as the particular challenges faced by the Church have changed.

Overall, the historical focus of this book is both its great strength and also its limitation. It is unrivalled as a critical essay on how priesthood has been conceptualised across the history of the Western Church, and will be extremely useful as a work of reference on this. But you may be disappointed if you place too much reliance on the subtitle and are looking for a wider analysis of ministry and what it might look like in the future.

Liverpool

Miranda Threlfall-Holmes

S.-O. Back and E. Koskenniemi, eds., *Institutions of the Emerging Church*. London and New York: Bloomsbury T. and T. Clark, 2016. Pp. xx, 156. Hb. £60. ISBN 978-0-567-66643-7.

This volume consists of eight essays on the topics of ministry, authority and sacraments in the early Church. The authors are all Scandinavian scholars associated with universities or theological colleges in Finland, Norway or Sweden.

Samuel Byrskog provides a succinct but wide-ranging discussion of the origin and development of the concept of the apostle. He begins with a selective survey of recent scholarship on the subject, before analysing the evidence of Luke-Acts (where, in keeping with many others, he finds two complementary understandings of the apostolate), the undisputed letters of Paul, and the Pauline tradition as reflected in the Pastoral Letters and Ephesians. He concludes that although the precise origin of the Christian concept of the apostle is shrouded in darkness, it became important for Paul who developed and articulated the concept in order to defend himself against opponents, as seen most notably in Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians.

In an essay on apostolic tradition, Reidar Hvalvik notes how authors such as Tertullian, Irenaeus, the author of the *Letter to Diognetus* and Polycarp of Smyrna each appealed to the notion of one universal Christian faith, based on a tradition handed down from the apostles whose authority was recognised at an early stage. He finds the same idea in the Pastoral Letters, and argues that it can also be found in the undisputed letters of Paul, and that this is the basis of its recurrence in later texts.

The longest essay is by Erkki Koskenniemi, who surveys a range of titles that are used to refer to people in positions of authority in the communities to which the full range of letters attributed to Paul are addressed. He notes that the earliest sources appear to use the terms 'bishops' and 'elders' interchangeably, and finds no consistent terminology in the first Christian century for those appointed to positions of religious authority in local churches. 'What we do find is a living community shared by people appointed to this position' (p. 67).

Lars Hartman notes that Tertullian was the first author to write a treatise devoted to baptism, and analyses references to baptism found in four other texts: Titus 3.1–7, John 2.23–3.21, the *Didache*, and passages in the writings of Justin Martyr. He focuses on what they say about the state of Christians before and after their baptism, and notes how in various ways each author understands baptism to effect powerful change, because God is at work in it. He also notes that of the four texts, only the *Didache* discusses baptism for its own sake. The other three all refer to it in passing, which demonstrates that it ‘has an irresistible argumentative weight, or, to put it otherwise, it is an indisputable institution, whose fundamental position is self-evident’ (p. 90).

Next follow two essays on the eucharist. In the first, Jostein Ådna considers evidence for the eucharist in the letters of Paul and in Hebrews. The bulk of his essay is devoted to an analysis of relevant material in I Corinthians, which he understands to give a sufficient basis to form a picture of Paul’s understanding of the nature of the eucharist and its ritual character, not just a context-driven response to particular circumstances in Corinth. He also argues for the importance of the eucharist in all Pauline communities, and in favour of a eucharistic interpretation of certain passages in Hebrews. Thus, he concludes, the eucharist was ‘a strong unifying “ecumenical” element in the religious practices of early Christian communities’ (p. 110) and had its origin in Jesus’s last passover meal with his disciples.

In the second, Sven-Olav Back investigates references to the eucharist in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, treating each letter carefully as a separate text before offering a synthesis in which he notes six key features of what he refers to as Ignatius’s ‘eucharistic “doctrine”’ (p. 127).

The book ends with an essay by Tord Fornberg on ‘the people of God’. He observes the popularity of the term in twentieth-century ecclesiology, but notes that it is an ambiguous expression that can be understood in different ways. To explicate its range of possible meanings, he considers a range of Jewish and Christian texts, from the Hebrew Bible through the New Testament to the *Letter of Barnabas*, and reflects on the contested identity of the people of God with reference to the separation of Christians from Jews, the problem of Christian

anti-semitism, and ongoing differences between the ways in which Jews and Christians read the Hebrew Bible.

Only Reidar Hvalvik refers explicitly to the interest in current scholarship in questions about variety and diversity in early Christianity, although most of the contributors address this issue at least obliquely. On the whole, they succeed in recognising the distinctive concerns reflected in different texts, while also making a plausible case for continuity between the theological outlook of the authors whose writings they address. They range across both canonical and non-canonical texts, but focus almost exclusively on those usually regarded as proto-orthodox in nature; I found no references to texts often labelled as 'gnostic', 'apocryphal' or even 'heretical'.

University of Oxford

Andrew Gregory

D. J. Grumett, *Material Eucharist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xii, 322. Hb. £75. ISBN 978-0-19-876707-7.

There is a tendency among those reflecting on the eucharist to focus on the community that the eucharist creates. Often they inhabit de Lubac's thinking that 'literally speaking, the Eucharist makes the Church' (*Corpus Mysticum*, 2nd edn, SCM Press, 2006, p. 89). They emphasise corporate ecclesial life, a critical alternative to social isolation and economic commodification, and a challenge to those who advocate the latter. David Grumett's *Material Eucharist*, a diachronic study drawing insights from across the centuries, aims rather to suggest that the eucharist is more than sharing by ecclesial groups in Christian fellowship. So he attends to the material elements of the eucharist, and thereby seeks to reconnect the very materiality of the creation, the material life and identity of Jesus Christ, present in bodily form in the elements of bread and wine, and the flesh and blood of those who receive the consecrated elements. As Grumett writes,

Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist is defended only in the context of a prior acknowledgement, grounded in the doctrine of creation, of Christ's action upon and presence within the whole created order. Rather than re-

garding the Eucharist as an exceptional intrusion into an otherwise mundane materiality, I view it as exemplifying a divine action and presence that extend more widely. (p. 6)

The eucharist, with a transformed materiality at its centre, therefore speaks of the transformation of the material world and the Church within it, and criticises matter viewed as self-sustaining and human identity as that made and fashioned simply and sufficiently by the consumption of commodified goods. In this latter case, what is at stake is not consumption, but what is consumed – Christ bodily present in the consecrated elements, or the inherently transient material world.

As well as attending to Christ's bodily presence in the consecrated bread and wine, Grumett explores the meanings of these basic, material elements. So, for example, he writes of the bread made and used in the eucharistic rites. The wheat cut, its grains ground, the salt, olive oil, water and leaven added in the making of the bread speak analogically, for example, of Christians put through the mill of baptismal life, their being ground by fasting and exorcism, seasoned by the salt of the Holy Spirit, anointed with the oil of chrism, baptised in water and raised to newness of life. Equally, he points to the eulogia, the blessed bread often distributed in the Orthodox rite at the end of the eucharist, an instrument for establishing and preserving an organic unity, founded in Christ, of the giver and recipient, the latter often the neediest in society.

In exploring the usage and meaning of such basic elements, Grumett does not aim to dictate how the eucharist is to be celebrated; but he does prompt the reader to reflect on contemporary practice. Any changes to practice may raise at least two issues. First, the eucharistic elements have been interpreted allegorically; and so caution needs to be exercised lest, through the use of allegory, a practice is made a ventriloquist's dummy, saying only what the person adopting it wants to be said. Second, any practice, however interpreted, may remain mute unless and until the observer is given the ears to hear what the practice would say. Both raise significant challenges for a eucharistic community's catechetical programmes.

As noted, Grumett makes the material eucharist and such issues as community and social justice inseparable. Whether a material eucharist is unique in demanding and delivering such community building and social justice is an interesting question. It may be that there is sufficient materiality in a strong sense of the incarnation (such as, for example, in the anti-docetic writings of Ignatius of Antioch) or a high doctrine of creation (such as in Quakerism, according to which the world and all therein is continuously held by God in graced material being) to effect the ends of community and social justice that Grumett desires.

Oxford

Alvyn Pettersen

A. S. Bishop, *Eucharist Shaping and Hebert's Liturgy and Society: Church, Mission and Personhood*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016. Pp. xvi, 160. Hb. £95. ISBN 978-1-4724-6328-9.

Arthur Gabriel Hebert (1886–1963) was a member of the Society of the Sacred Mission, an Anglican religious order founded in 1893, and a scholar with particular expertise in liturgical and biblical studies. His proficiency as a linguist not only enabled him to read the material emerging from the European liturgical movement in the original French and German, but also equipped him to translate new theological work for an English-speaking audience. The Swedish theologians Yngve Brilioth and Gustav Aulén became widely known through Hebert's translations of *Eucharistic Faith and Practice* (SPCK, 1930) and *Christus Victor* (SPCK, 1931) respectively. His own *Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World* (SPCK, 1935) and *The Parish Communion* (SPCK, 1937) adopted the liturgical movement's emphasis on participation, but with innovative insights and proposals. There is a consciousness in Hebert's writing of this period of the role of liturgical practice in modelling society. Acknowledging that the eucharist was not likely to be the principal service in a Church of England parish on a typical Sunday in the mid-1930s, he urged the development of a parish communion. This would be timed to allow families to get themselves ready to go to church, and relieve 'housewives' from anxiety about ruining Sunday dinner. A parish breakfast might follow immediately, continuing the

liturgical bond of community and replenishing the needs of those who had fasted in preparation for the liturgy.

In this study, Andrew Bishop returns to *Liturgy and Society*, seeking in it indications for a twenty-first-century recovery of the eucharist as a practice which shapes people and society. He conducts his exploration under three headings: ecclesiology, missiology and liturgical anthropology, moving towards a conclusion in which the eucharistically-shaped human being is also shaped towards proper ethical participation in society. A Church operating the kind of 'generous ecclesiology' (p. 146) which Bishop sees imagined in Hebert's work would be properly fit for service to the world.

The architecture is admirable, but the execution tends to obscure its clear and assured shape. This is largely the consequence of the book's genesis in a doctoral dissertation, the strategy of which was to engage a number of modern theologians in dialogue with aspects of Hebert's work. Time and again, what begins as a conversation becomes a complete shift in focus to the theological preoccupations of the dialogue partner. The reader often loses sight of Hebert altogether, as the discussion's lateral branches extend. What results is a rather episodic text, which introduces very interesting and certainly not irrelevant material, but without much central anchoring. Theologians of the stature of William Cavanaugh, Sarah Coakley, David Ford, James Smith, Sam Wells and Rowan Williams offer great riches to the kind of argument that the book tries to develop and it is unfortunate that the opportunity is missed to engage the arguments of these critical interlocutors in a vigorous discussion of Hebert's book, rather than chasing their recent writing down rabbit holes. Another difficulty is the book's sense of obligation to the era of Fresh Expressions in which it took shape. There are periodic references to the Church of England's *Mission-Shaped Church* report (Church House Publishing, 2004) and to Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank's *For the Parish* (SCM Press, 2010), but without much guidance as to their importance for the project that Bishop is developing.

This is a valuable reminder that the Church has a tradition of ecclesiological, missiological and liturgical awareness on which to draw: it does not have to invent these things entirely afresh in each generation, although it

does have to be acutely conscious of its own context. The introduction of Ian McEwan's *Saturday* as a new atheist novel into the final chapters is a reminder – if rather middle to highbrow – of the world that the contemporary Church must embrace. At the same time, in looking back to its heritage, the Church must reckon with what was misguided. Bishop refers to Hebert's abhorrence of fascism, but does not confront the admiration that he expresses, with a few reservations, for German national socialism. Perhaps this signals towards the kind of project that might be undertaken in future to rediscover Hebert himself, in a much more rigorous way.

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Bridget Nichols

M. Patten, *Leading a Multicultural Church*. London: SPCK, 2016. Pp. xii, 164. Pb. £12.99. ISBN 978-0-281-07504-1.

In *Leading a Multicultural Church*, Malcolm Patten offers the Church precisely what is needed in a period of increasing racial and ethnic diversity in both the US and the UK – namely, a pastorally sensitive, but biblically and theologically grounded reflection on providing leadership in a multicultural church. I was delighted to discover this book.

Having attempted a similar reflection at approximately the same time that Patten attempted his, I found his words to be an accurate and worthy account of both the challenges and the urgency of ministry in a multicultural setting. Patten's book has emerged from a doctoral thesis, involving qualitative research into the multicultural church – and at times it reads that way – while my own book about the multicultural church was largely a memoir, with fewer footnotes and more anecdotes.

Another difference between the two approaches is that Patten has lived with cultural diversity – both in the church and in his own family – far longer than I had when I wrote my book. This vast experience helps to make his book an important contribution to what has been, until recently, a mostly neglected subject. Patten's personal experience is a considerable strength of this book and gives it a sense of authority. I wish that he had shared more of that experience than he has (he has served multicultural churches for much of his ministry, and his wife is the daughter of Jamaican immigrants to the UK).

While my own experience with the multicultural church was decidedly brief compared to Patten's, I nevertheless recognise the challenges that Patten mentions. Churches can be, and often are, exceedingly complex, but a multicultural church raises this complexity to a very high level, requiring leaders with exceptional gifts and training. I was pleased to find a chapter on 'navigating the pastoral challenges', in which Patten describes the 'many surprises' that such a situation presents for births, marriages, deaths and more. 'Improvisation', he writes, 'is often required' (p. 105). This assessment is perhaps too modest, unless by 'improvisation' Patten means an unusual blend of training, intelligence, curiosity and humility. Leaders who would serve a multicultural church are required to stretch and learn and occasionally confront their own racism and cultural stereotyping. This last item requires further exploration within the Church today.

Patten's chapter on 'overcoming prejudice' contains several principles on which a multicultural church should be established. It is hard to believe that in the Western Church in the twenty-first century, a statement would have to be made that church leadership roles are open to all regardless of their ethnicity or racial background, but Patten knows the Church and its people. In the same chapter, Patten urges that 'those in positions of authority must affirm publicly and regularly that the church is a multicultural environment' (p. 70). I wish that matters like this would be obvious to all, that of course the Church is expected to be multicultural, but anyone who has been around the Church for a while will have to admit that repeated declarations about who we are and what we believe are critically important.

I want to call attention to the last section of Patten's work – the Church's mission – and offer a loud 'amen' to the following statement: 'Whether we are thinking of existing churches or planting new churches in multicultural communities, then the development of multicultural churches should be part of any denomination or church network's mission strategy in the UK today' (p. 148). In the margin, I wrote 'and the US as well'. Sadly, this is not the case in the US, where churches today, in spite of the increasing diversity of the population, continue to be segregated racially and ethnically. My return to the US a year ago,

after living in Europe for five years, was a jolting reminder that the Church in the US has a considerable distance to go. Complacency or inertia or everyday racism holds back the Church from what it can and should be.

I am glad that Patten has written what he has, and hope that those with ears to hear will listen.

Holland, MI

Douglas Brouwer

D. J. Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017. Pp. xii, 177. Pb. £16.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-7393-4.

The 'International Church' is a phenomenon that rarely attracts attention but any Christian posted by their company to a city overseas is likely to have encountered one. On my own travels, visiting friends, I've found myself in a church-share in Nyon, Switzerland, a hotel in Skopje, Macedonia, and the top floor of a large walled home in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Each time, I have discovered an interesting ecumenical potpourri, an eclectic gathering of expatriates, often led by Americans, usually singing in English and eagerly catching up on local news. Founded in many world cities over the last 50 years or so as a refuge for Western Christians abroad, they are now coming of age, with a growing desire to integrate into the local community, increasing numbers of local people joining the congregation, and many looking to diversify their mission through outreach to other expatriates and church planting. It is the 'International Church' that is profiled by Douglas Brouwer in this insightful book.

The book is more autobiography than objective study, the thoughtful and reflective journal of an American pastor who for almost three decades served in predominantly white monocultural churches across the United States and then, at the age of 59, took the plunge to move to the International Protestant Church in Zurich, Switzerland.

The book is structured around ten lessons that Brouwer has elicited from his experience: the meaning of 'home', implications of the church's name, styles of leadership, theological and ecclesiological differences, communication, language, stereotypes, nationalism, music and hospitality.

Each chapter provides illustrations of the issue, Brouwer's reflections on it and what is to be learned, with a particular objective to inform the Church in the USA. He says, 'I believe that these churches have a great deal to teach the American church about being the church in a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial setting' (p. 11).

Perhaps the most engaging aspect of Brouwer's book is his humility, best illustrated in the chapter entitled 'Be Theologically Generous'. Here he discusses what he describes as 'the lack of a theological centre' (p. 73). Brouwer is disarmingly honest about the struggle of pastoring a diverse church. He describes the criticism that he endured following the baptism of a baby of cohabiting parents and highlights how the responses were both wearying and yet theologically stimulating at the same time. He contrasts the ease of handling contentious topics in a monocultural church, where there is a consensus of opinion, with the challenge of offering theological leadership in a context where such consensus may be hard to find. He offers the example of a series that he taught on faith and science to show how, with careful preparation and respect for all opinions in the room, progress can be made. He says, 'To make a church like ours work, to bring so many diverse backgrounds and opinions together, to expect to get along, requires that everyone do the difficult work of considering another person's point of view' (p. 70), and of course, that takes time and patience.

Although Brouwer writes with an eye for the future of the American Church, leaders of multicultural churches, wherever they find themselves, will find resonance with his journey, take encouragement to persevere through difficult twists and turns, and discover useful tips for ministry along the way. His ultimate reward is where he lands the book – on a communion Sunday at the church. He writes,

For one brief moment [...] we look like the gathering on that first Pentecost or that gathering described in Revelation 7 where every nation, tribe, and tongue stands before the Lamb. We have experienced the hospitality of God, the hospitality that in turn frees us to invite and welcome others. We become involved in Jesus' own work of drawing people together. (p. 170)

Stirring stuff!

Walthamstow, London

Malcolm Patten

B. S. Fulton, *China's Urban Christians: A Light that Cannot Be Hidden*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2016. Pp. viii, 145. Pb. £15. ISBN 978-0-7188-9447-4.

This very readable volume brings together two phenomena that have dominated Chinese social development over the past 40 years: urbanisation and the growth of religion, in particular Christianity. Brent Fulton sets out to explore how the challenges posed by urbanisation have impacted on Chinese churches and how they, in turn, have been responding to these developments. The book provides an interesting and well-informed overview of Christian activity in China for a Christian audience. It is not an academic book and makes no pretensions to be one. Nonetheless, readers, even specialist readers, will find interesting pieces in the bibliography. At times, especially in the themes of the chapters, the book seems to follow on quite closely from previously published books on contemporary Christianity. But it complements the findings of earlier books with additional materials, some of which were gained from interviews with the author.

The first two chapters provide the necessary background in which to place the more in-depth explorations of the chapters that follow. Chapter 3 offers good insights into the structures of church communities, pastor training, and the theological direction of the churches. It is interesting to note that what was proposed by the churches themselves as a way to move from the margins into the centre of society, that is to say, the involvement in charitable work, has now become a requirement of churches rather than an option. Chapter 5 further picks up on different and new activities in which urban churches have started to get involved. Chapter 4 is particularly valuable, as it outlines the many challenges that the churches are facing, unrelated to any political challenges, even though these certainly still exist and are dealt with in chapter 8.

Chapter 6 provides interesting and critical insights into the disparate character of Chinese churches, which often find it difficult to work together even though they share an aim to contribute to global Christian mission. Fulton argues that while urban churches may have the financial

resources and cross-cultural experience necessary to engage in international mission work, they often lack the drive and religious zeal of rural congregations. In chapter 7, he further digs into the different reasons why the Chinese Church is far from being a united body. He cites the inability of different personalities to work together and doctrinal differences as two of several reasons that prevent the Church in China from emerging as a unified voice and body.

The book adopts a positive tone about the way in which Chinese churches and Christians can move from the margins to the centre of society, seeing that the Chinese government's attention 'has moved from ideological purity to economic development' (p. 3). Unfortunately, reading the book in 2019, this optimistic tone has proven premature, as the party-state has significantly tightened ideological control, including over religion, and therefore sadly much of what Fulton outlines as positive potential needs to be considered thwarted at this point in time. However, this is not the author's fault. Change has been swift and in many cases the severity of control that religion is now facing again under the requirement to 'sinicise' has been unexpected. Apart from tightening control of religious activity and entering the churches themselves in a visible manner, the state has also started to encroach on the meaning of the word 'belief'. While Fulton argues that in the previous decade, the main issue for the Church in China shifted from freedom of belief to freedom of association, in the time since the publication of his book, the party-state has become increasingly preoccupied with the very definition of belief and faith itself. Those concerned with the Church in China might eagerly await a follow-up volume in hopefully the not-too-distant future.

University of Westminster

Gerda Wielander

H. Askeland and U. Schmidt, eds., *Church Reform and Leadership of Change*. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2016. Pp. xiv, 203. Pb. £17. ISBN 978-0-227-17618-4.

This book brings together papers from the fourth biennial conference on church leadership and organisational change, held in Oslo in 2013.

It offers a breadth of perspectives, ranging from keynote presentations to contributions from doctoral and masters' students (the latter surely something to be encouraged). The editors are professors in Norway and Denmark, and the Churches considered are primarily European Protestant denominations: from Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and England.

The book begins with three substantial chapters reflecting on changes in Church and state over recent decades. The first, on the Evangelical Church in Germany by Isolde Karle, is followed by two on the Church of Norway by Andreas Aarflot and Ulla Schmidt respectively. The focus of the first two chapters is on the Churches under consideration and the challenges that they face, while the third has a broader perspective, reflecting the author's background in a department of culture and society rather than theology.

In each case, themes are described – reducing adherents, amalgamation of parishes, increased reliance on volunteers, financial challenges – that will be familiar to many. Connections with other Churches facing similar challenges have to be made by the reader. I was also struck by the limited interaction with wider literature on organisational change. But it was exactly this perspective which was well covered by the next chapter, on the management of meaning in the Church of Sweden, by Bim Riddersporre and Johanna Gustafsson Lindberg. In particular, they draw attention to the work of such critical management scholars as Mats Alvesson of Lund University.

A pair of chapters then explores recent – and ongoing – changes in the Church of Norway. Kjetil Fretheim's focus is at the local level, examining the role of paid staff and volunteers, while Harald Askeland looks at the enhanced managerial role of the (area) dean between bishop and parishes. Tensions between pastoral and managerialist tendencies are apparent throughout. Once again, these themes will be familiar to many. It is also encouraging to see research beyond the local congregation, which has tended to be the focus of much academic study since James Hopewell's *Congregation* (Fortress, 1987).

Two case studies follow. Per Hansson compares clergy discipline processes in the Church of England and the Church of Sweden: while

the subject matter is not always edifying, Hansson astutely observes wider cultural issues. Karen Marie Sø Leth-Nissen investigates those who have deliberately chosen to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark, presenting some rich material from interviews (and demonstrating how qualitative methodologies can offer more powerful narratives than many a quantitative study).

Hege Steinsland explores the dual nature of leadership (with state and ecclesial perspectives) in the Church of Norway. This chapter offers another good example of interaction with literature from beyond the ecclesiological fold, for example Joe Raelin on 'leaderful' organisations and Otto Scharmer's 'theory U' approach to change. The final chapter, by Maria Åkerström, investigates examples of entrepreneurship in the Church of Sweden.

All the chapters include bibliographies, although their disciplinary and geographical range vary considerably. With the exception of the chapters by Riddersporre and Lindberg, and Steinsland, these bibliographies are limited in their reference to wider literature. Thus the chapter on leaving Church does not reference such works as *Gone for Good?* by Philip Richter and Leslie Francis (Epworth, 2007) and the chapter on entrepreneurship does not mention Michael Volland's *The Minister as Entrepreneur* (SPCK, 2015).

I am reminded how, when attending conferences, gems of provocation and learning are encountered as much in the conversations during refreshment breaks as in set piece presentations. This book offers something similar, with nuggets tucked away in the middle and later chapters. The Church of Sweden, and its neighbours in Scandinavia and beyond, are to be congratulated on promoting dialogue and learning. I believe that there are willing conversation partners out there – across several disciplines – who would be happy to engage together in further research.

Sarum College, Salisbury

Tim Harle

D. Brown, *Leaven: The Hidden Power of Culture in the Church*. Weybridge: RoperPenberthy Publishing, 2016. Pp. 254. Pb. £12.99. ISBN 978-1-903905-93-7.

Preaching that there are two ways to live, one leading to fullness of life, the other towards death, is an ancient tradition, extending back through the *Didache* to Deuteronomy. This book might be read as an extended contemporary excursion into that genre. At its root is the contrast between the way of love and the way of lovelessness, but its originality lies in how it derives from this an account of two cultures, one of God's kingdom and one of the kingdom of this world, via the metaphor of the title. Brown points to the symbolism of leaven in the rituals of the passover as disclosing an urgent task for the Church today: to grow a culture infused wholly with the leaven of the kingdom. To that end, he insists, 'we must first search out and destroy any *old leaven* that has silently attached to his Body and evades attention' (p. 18, Brown's emphasis). Such infection, for Brown, has four especially harmful strains: 'a worldly use of controlling power'; 'a worldly enchantment with historic customs'; 'a worldly individualism'; and 'a worldly dogmatism' (pp. 16 and 70).

Such stark antitheses have considerable rhetorical power, and Brown is passionate in urging the reader to confront the 'challenge of institutional distress' (p. 27) facing the Church of England, his particular focus. He draws on his experience in both the Royal Navy and a bishop's staff team to identify some of the critical factors here and to suggest some 'entry points for change': 'the demolition of rank, the reshaping of ministerial lifestyles in partnerships, the increasing pattern of living-together, and the urgent acquisition of expertise in relational healing across the Church' (p. 184). He seeks a Church 'structured on cascaded friendship' (p. 236), an organism and not an organisation (for example, p. 171).

Rhetorical power, however, is not always accompanied by conceptual clarity. At certain points, Brown seems to use 'relationship' as the contrary of law, structure and institution (pp. 85–93), all of which are somehow associated with the rule of Caesar rather than God. Yet one

might argue that they are themselves forms of human relationship, and moreover integral to the society that belongs to God's purpose for human living. There is little engagement in this volume with the rich seam of Christian thinking about the theology of culture over the past century, or indeed with the history over the same period of repeated attempts to reform the Churches, including the Church of England – not least 'Renewal and Reform', whose effects are likely to have been beginning to be felt before the book was finished. For Brown, the leaven of love seems to be all about the kinds of face-to-face relationships that we cultivate within the community of the Church, but what if those relationships will only know true fellowship in Christ as we turn together with Christ to the world for which he died?

Brown works hard to ground his message in exegesis of the New Testament, and in particular the life of Jesus as described in the gospels. This leads him to articulate a binary opposition between the culture of God's kingdom that Jesus brought into the world and the culture of the society in which he lived, wholly animated by the leaven of 'the scribes, Pharisees and Herod' (for example, p. 41), treated as a single entity that remains 'alive and well in the 21st century, having morphed its way through societies afflicted by tyranny, materialism and secularism' (p. 69). Not only does this treatment of the New Testament appear unaware of debates in historical scholarship regarding Jesus and first-century Judaism; it also seems quite oblivious to the dangers of reprising themes of Christian anti-Judaism and anti-semitism. To say that the culture of the Pharisees 'is well summarised as lovelessness, that fermenting influence directly opposing God's love' (p. 36) and marked by 'depraved' and 'devilish power' (pp. 42 and 40), that the destruction of the temple was 'divinely sanctioned' (p. 98) and that 'their nation' murdered the Son of God (p. 120): these things come from a different strain of infection from those occupying the foreground of the author's attention.

Council for Christian Unity, London

Jeremy Worthen

A. Alker, *Is a Radical Church Possible? Reshaping Its Life for Jesus' Sake*. Alresford: Christian Alternative Books, 2016. Pp. viii, 155. Pb. £12.99. ISBN 978-1-78535-250-8.

This book is something of a testament to a life lived in the service of liberal Christian faith. The author, Adrian Alker, has been an Anglican priest for over 30 years. He founded the St Mark's Centre for Radical Christianity in Sheffield and currently chairs the Progressive Christianity Network. This reads as his considered message to the Church from which he has recently retired.

As such, there is some looking backwards to the great names of liberal Christianity – John Robinson, Jack Spong, David Jenkins and Marcus Borg are all frequently cited. And there is a challenge to the Church to reform and become a place of honesty, a non-hierarchical 'round table church' (p. 120), a place of compassion, justice and hope for the planet. It is a vision designed to inspire, though I find it flawed.

In the first half of the book, Alker attempts an honest re-telling of the story of Jesus. In part, this is a demolition job – no virgin birth, no Christmas angels, no resurrection (or at least no requirement for one). Jesus is a radical Jewish preacher, healer and exorcist, killed for speaking and behaving in a way that irritated the religious authorities. The resurrection is simply the vindication of Jesus's great compassion and love, seen in the lives of Jesus's followers and not requiring an empty tomb.

The second half of the book turns its attention to reforming the Church along the lines of honesty, to 'remake our churches to be more Jesus-shaped' (p. 86). This involves honesty in reading the Bible, articulating the principles for reading and preaching; and honesty in worship, with less sin and guilt and fewer doctrinal elements. Alker's honest ecclesiology is non-hierarchical and reflects the Jesus of the first half of the book, by engaging in compassion for the needy, campaigns for justice, and caring for the ecological future.

There seems little in this vision of the Church to complain about; much is positive. But I am not convinced by Alker's repeated injunction to be honest. Is it really honest to reduce the life of Jesus to that of

someone who spoke and acted out of radical love, but whose miracles are stories deriving from the 'pre-scientific world of Jesus' (p. 42)? I fear that there is arrogance in presuming that the people of Jesus's time were all easily duped by snake oil.

Alker's account of the death and resurrection of Jesus is similarly unconvincing. When faced with Alker's counter-cultural man of compassion and love, I am reminded of William Temple's jibe, 'Why anyone should have troubled to crucify the Christ of Liberal Protestantism has always been a mystery' (*Readings in St John's Gospel (First and Second Series)*, Macmillan, 1955, p. xxiv). Honesty should have required Alker to say just how far are his account of the death of Jesus and the beginnings of the Church from any account written at the time or within a century afterwards.

Alker counters a question about the truth of the Christmas story with one about the meaning of it. I heartily agree with this approach, until Alker appears to make them alternatives. The truth of the resurrection is indeed in transformed lives that risked death to work for the coming of God's kingdom. But those risking their lives did not hold Alker's view that the meaning of the resurrection can be separated from a risen body.

This means that the honest Church that Alker seeks to shape on the account of Jesus that he has given is further skewed. There is a romanticism here bordering on naivety. Compassion, justice and ecology are all good things, but one does not have to work at them too hard before one encounters competing needs, goods and outcomes. How is the radical Church to decide between them? Alker doesn't offer resources. Perhaps we need to interrogate the word 'radical'. If it means a wholesale casting out of things disliked, then Alker's Church would indeed be radical. If, however, to be radical is to return to the roots, then a more patient and honest account of Jesus is required.

Diocese of Bristol

Simon J. Taylor

C. Deacy, *Christmas as Religion: Rethinking Santa, the Secular, and the Sacred*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv, 223. Hb. £30. ISBN 978-0-19-875456-5.

Granny made a virtue out of seasonal correctness. She was a veritable liturgical Mrs Beeton: every festivity in its place and a place for every festivity. She was Christian and, more exactly, Roman Catholic. She would likely have found Christopher Deacy's *Christmas as Religion* as off-putting in June as I do, writing this in June – not for its content, I hasten to add, but by its garish, secular book-jacket image: a gold five-pointed star atop a silk red Christmas-tree-shaped ribbon – very commercial, commodified Xmas to a tee, but not Granny's cup of tea at all – as anathema to her as a mince pie or the Bing Crosby standard before Yuletide proper. And the disorientation of reading a book that touches however remotely on the birth of Jesus – after all, it was 2,019 years ago with plenty of secular modernisation in between – is precisely the issue at stake for Granny and all who, like her, feel uneasy at the diminishing interval between 'essential' Christmas (sacred, religious, always snowy) and the looming presence of mammon in the shape of ubiquitous sales, nativity-neutered tinsely telly ads, and cash registers jingling all the festive way from early September before even a single tread of snow lies dinted.

Deacy sweeps away such Granny-angst, employing the theologian-cum-sociologist's gaze to see beyond the traditional retentive confines of liturgy and ecclesiastical ritual. In a feast of sociological realism, *Christmas as Religion* provides a richly detailed and hugely expansive conspectus of Xmas (to employ this sixteenth-century word, now normative for those who prefer their Christmas bread with the 'Christ' clout taken out): a jamboree of shopping and media-saturated entertainment that is 'still framed and anchored within the language and categories of the Christian tradition' (p. 7). It is this conundrum (p. 19) – or miracle – that this choc-full, vivid and swaggering book explores with such deftness and aplomb. Deacy manages to negotiate adroitly the paradox of Christmas as, at one and the same time, the most endearing, enduring and entrancing of folk festivals *and* the most callously exploitative and

costly of capitalist ventures that impact directly on home and family, penetrating the consciousness and consumer appetites of children.

The ghosts of Durkheim, Mauss, Eliade and Victor Turner grace the pages of this book, bringing conceptual depth to its ethnographic density. While Granny policed the festival faith boundaries of, in her eyes, the one, true, everlasting tradition, a confident relativism pervades the social scientific imagination. Drawing extensively on Edward Bailey's framework of 'implicit religion', Deacy navigates the fluid, boundaryless interface of sacred and profane in such a way that he nails the key issue – that Christmas is both religious and secular. We can have our Christmas cake from Waitrose and our Christmas pud from Granny's kitchen and eat them both. Calendrical and cultural constraints confining Christmas to homely 'ways' and church-related rituals of identity and belonging give way before Christmas as 'lived experience' in a world lured by temples of consumption, bargain cruises, and hotel spa extravaganzas promising an 'away from it all' festive experience. Christmas is constructed, not given. It is packaged to suit the signs of the times. It flows between the crib and the manger and Santa's grotto and the cash machine. One side of the equation draws on the other. Both are necessary to each other for survival in the postmodern world. As Deacy observes (p. 8): 'it would thus be absurd to try and suggest that Christmas is *either* a religious *or* a secular festival. It would be more profitable to construe Christmas as being both – or, equally for that matter, as neither' (Deacy's emphasis). How long the residual trace elements of religiosity will remain under the cleansing effects of 'dereligionification' remains to be seen.

'Christmas Films and the Persistence of the Supernatural' (chapter 5) and the segment 'Christmas Junior Choice' (pp. 87–97) of 'Is Christmas a "Secular" Religion?' (chapter 3) are masterly and moving in their intricate and comprehensive coverage of the pop cultural 'mediation' of modern Christmastime. Strangely, there is no 'Queen's Speech', but everything else you could wish for here in stocking-filledness. Deacy tellingly describes *Santa Claus: The Movie* (1985) as 'littered with product placement' (p. 189). And yet the 'holy night' shineth through the blandishments, the glitter, and the 'great escape' into consumer bliss. Something of *communitas* remains and will, in all likelihood, remain,

to remind us of Granny's plaintive refrain: 'It's about something more. Families. Children. Giving. It has a magic of its own'.

With a superb index, an excellent bibliography, exceptionally high-quality production values and excellent writing, *Christmas as Religion* is a first-class piece of scholarship, a felicitous contribution to the literature on festivals, popular culture, and religion and society, and a very useful support for teaching – and quiz compilation. But take care that it is available as a present *only* at Christmastime proper for your more 'religious' Granny and Grampy (Deacy's word, p. x).

Nottingham

William Keenan

C. L. Downing, *Salvation from Cinema: The Medium is the Message*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. Pp. viii, 196. Pb. £33.99. ISBN 978-1-138-91394-3.

This book tries genuinely hard not so much to distance itself from but to supersede most of the existing scholarship in the field of theology/ religion and film. Although the title is a play on many of the other publications in the field, which include my *Faith in Film* (Ashgate, 2005) and Robert Pope's *Salvation in Celluloid* (T. and T. Clark, 2007), the key difference is the preposition 'from'. For, rather than take a largely textual or story-based approach, as is the case in much of the existing literature, Crystal Downing here engages with the rudiments of film theory – and the extent to which it is deployed here is impressive – and thereby takes issue with the way in which 'most who extract religious and theological insights from movies [...] only rarely [employ] the basic cinematic vocabulary that identifies how viewers see what they see' (p. 6). Focusing instead on 'the film's entire visual structure' (p. 5), *Salvation from Cinema* stands out by the way in which it draws on Marshall McLuhan's dictum that the *medium* is the message. Accordingly, each chapter draws on a different facet of film theory and theorists including Bazin, Derrida and Mulvey, in order to focus on the techniques that comprise the medium. Arguing for 'a hypostatic union of medium and message in film scholarship' (p. 26), Downing looks at areas of intersection between film studies and religion.

At times, it feels that the ground being opened up is a little too tentative, as when Downing follows a really good understanding of how in *Elegy* (2008), 'rather than mindlessly identifying with an unseen movie camera that generates a salacious male gaze, attentive viewers become aware of what is usually "the absent one" in cinema – the camera – and their own viewing bodies in relation to it' (p. 71) with less detail than is ideal of how this can be used as a dialogue partner with religion. Downing refers to how we can open 'ourselves to beauty that lies beyond the surfaces of gorgeous stars' (p. 71), but more detail on how this can be played out would have been helpful. Some of the other connections are a little too contrived, as when Downing claims that 'Breaking the fourth wall [...] is a good metaphor for what it means to be a person of faith' in the respect that 'Christians believe [...] that a transcendent someone broke through the fourth wall in the opposite direction: from transcendence onto the stage of earthly existence' (p. 87).

Whether we quite have 'a new approach to religion and film' (p. 121) on display here is a moot point, but I do commend Downing's wish to deconstruct such binaries as art vs commerce; montage vs *mise en scène*; auteur vs Hollywood; semiotics vs story; and apparatus control vs viewer agency (p. 122). Ultimately, I think that this book is a way of demonstrating that religion and film continue to have the capacity to be really creative dialogue partners, though I wonder if Downing could have been more open as to the faith-based dimension. When I read that 'the field of religion and film might be fertilized through the exploration of movies that deconstruct economies of exchange by offering images of unearned, unmerited, unanticipated gifts of salvation' (p. 126) and that 'By regarding religion and film as gifts, viewers might be encouraged to follow the example of "the gift", responding to both religion and film with gifts of productive seeing that exceed economies of exchange' (p. 140), I am not wholly convinced that she has succeeded in pushing scholarship beyond its present limitations. Downing paraphrases Derrida who once said that 'to turn to religion is also to turn religion around' and argues likewise that 'to turn to the field of religion and film is also to turn it around' (p. 121). The use of *metanoia* in the conclusion is telling, as this book is really about using film to point to transcendental and conversion

experiences, just via a different means than narrative, and I suspect that many film scholars will fail to share the goal of this book, which is that 'cinema can energize the spiritual automaton in each of us, but only if we have eyes to see' (p. 176).

University of Kent

Chris Deacy

D. J. Shepherd, ed., *The Silents of Jesus in the Cinema (1897–1927)*.

New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. Pp. xii, 292. Hb. £85. ISBN 978-0-415-74169-9.

Jaroslav Pelikan, the historian of Christian doctrine, wrote in *Jesus through the Centuries* (Yale University Press, 1997, p. xv) that there are two parts to the history of Jesus. One part has examined Jesus's person according to the faith and teaching of the Christian Church. The other part is the lesser-known place of Jesus 'in the general history of culture'. It is difficult to believe that the two are mutually exclusive, given the Church's historical social dominance (particularly in Europe), as well as its sponsorship of various forms of art over the centuries. But the two parts come into sharp focus in film, especially when that medium is explored by theologians and biblical scholars. This is particularly true of this volume. While the portrayal of Jesus's life, ministry and mission on film has already been the subject of a number of publications, this is the first to concentrate on the earliest period of the cinema, namely the era of *silent* film.

Though not a monograph, this is a significant and erudite collection written by North American and European authors, most of them scholars of theology or religion but some of them scholars of film. The volume begins with a reflection on the fact that Jesus is rarely 'silent', according to the gospel accounts, and subsequent Christian tradition has been as fascinated with his speech as with his person and saving significance. Perhaps, then, silent film 'was singularly ill-suited to conveying the words of a sacred story', previously known popularly through oratorios and the tradition of the passion play (p. 2). Nevertheless, from 1897, the emerging cinematic industry turned numerous times to the story of Jesus and provided the means of that story's reception by the

public at large. It is the fascination with a mute (or at least muted) Jesus that lies behind the chapters in this book, though this is more implicit than explicit in most of them.

There are thirteen chapters in the book, each one considering a particular film. These include examples which are well-known to those who engage with theology or religion and film, such as Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), and de Mille's *The King of Kings* (1927). Lesser-known works are also discussed, such as *The Star of Bethlehem* (1912), *The Shadow of Nazareth* (1913) and *Christus* (1916). The approach is chronological, though the existence of several iterations of *La Vie et Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* results in three separate discussions, each of which focuses on a distinctive characteristic of the production. European films are considered alongside those of the emerging film industry in North America.

The films are universally pious and reverent towards the subject and while they offer some commentary on the social contexts from which they emerged, they tend towards the hagiographic in their portrayal and interpretation of the biblical story, while often omitting reference to the resurrection. They are, then, products of their time. Numerous stills from the films under review add to the book's value as illustrations of the points raised in the text as well as evocative reminders of the genre itself.

One of the criticisms levelled against theological interest in film is that it has not taken seriously the methods and insights of film studies. This is an accusation that cannot be made against this collection. Chapters discuss production and distribution history while also taking account of the pressures placed on studios and directors which range from the theological and the ideological through to the artistic. Specific aspects of the films are analysed under the heading of *mise en scène*, including costume, shot and lighting, while the work of Alice Guy, the only female director of a silent life of Jesus, is also discussed.

This is a fine collection of essays which contributes something novel to the field, though it speaks, of course, of a Jesus of culture who, for better or for worse, has long since disappeared.

Westminster College, Cambridge

Robert Pope

R. L. Neilson and M. J. Grow, eds., *From the Outside Looking In: Essays on Mormon History, Theology, and Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xxiv, 414. Pb. £22.99. ISBN 978-0-19-024466-8.

There is much to commend and a bit that confounds in this collection edited by Reid Neilson and Matthew Grow. The volume consists of fifteen essays, originally presented by eminent non-Mormon scholars as part of the Tanner lecture series of the Mormon History Association (MHA). The series brings scholars who are outside Mormon studies to the MHA annual conference to give a keynote speech on an issue relevant to Mormon history.

The fifteen selected lectures are organised into four sections: 'The American Religious Landscape', 'The Creation of Mormon Identities', 'The Study of Western Histories' and 'The Study of Global Religions'. Chapters written by notable scholars such as Leigh Eric Schmidt and Richard Brodhead cover topics from prophets to imperialism and from America's western expansion to the rise of global Christianity. As promised in Richard Bushman's general introduction, the essays undoubtedly demonstrate the complexity of Mormonism. The contributions by Catherine Brekus ('Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency') and Elliott West ('Becoming Mormon'), for instance, not only benefit from a scholarly perspective beyond Mormon studies but also use that positioning to highlight voices and experiences often overlooked within the narrower study of Mormon history – namely, female agency and the ravished identities of the children of converts. Dell Upton's essay ('What the Mormon Cultural Landscape Can Teach Us') also shines, interrogating the interface between objects, architecture, landscape and religious lives. Indeed, since its original delivery in 2004, this lecture's insights and wider relevance seem intensified in the light of the recent turn of religious studies toward material culture.

The issue of wider relevance illuminates the collection's few shortcomings. The various editorial notes and introductions exhibit a self-congratulatory, unequivocally 'insider' tone – indicating that the volume is primarily intended for Mormon scholars who see inherent

value in having their own cultural and historical moorings examined by established academics from the wider field, rather than for members of that wider field who may desire a better understanding of Mormonism's place in the world. Bushman's introduction, for example, suggests that the collected essays demonstrate the extent to which Mormonism has moved from a simplistic case study in the sociological study of new religious movements or American religious history to a more fully engaged participant in discussions of gender, identity and globalisation. Yet he concludes by arguing that the book is an opportunity for Mormons to reflect on their own tradition. Ultimately, there is a tension throughout the volume related directly to its wider relevance (or not) as well as to its supposed 'outsider' perspective. Although the authors are indeed from outside of Mormon studies, it should be noted that only one essay is written by a person of colour, only one by a woman, and only one by a non-historian. By and large, the essays are works of American religious history – presented to/by and compiled for/by white male historians of North America.

Of course, the disciplinary homogeneity is simply a function of the book's origins within the MHA and need not detract from the volume's academic merits. Indeed, it comes very near to being a 'one-stop shop' for nineteenth and twentieth-century Mormon history and culture, particularly as those topics relate to wider religious and political trends – domestically and internationally. Even the more vernacular style of a few of the essays – due to their origin as lectures – means that the book is quite accessible to interested laypersons as well as scholars of adjacent disciplines. Ultimately, the extent to which the volume represents a perspective justifiably characterised as 'from the outside looking in' is arguable, but the book's solid scholarship and involvement in incrementally expanding the scope and influence of Mormon studies is beyond question.

Durham University

Adam Powell

G. B. Connell, *Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Religious Diversity*. Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016. Pp. xiv, 188. Pb. \$30. ISBN 978-0-8028-6804-6.

Kierkegaard might seem an unlikely resource in the face of contemporary questions of religious diversity. Spikily polemical, he rejected speculative programmes of thought which tried to take a detached, God's-eye view of reality. His approach was resolutely existential, focused on dilemmas of ethical and religious choice which each individual has to make for themselves. He was hardly interested in adjudicating between faiths from the umpire's chair.

George Connell, however, makes an attractive case for taking seriously Kierkegaard's contribution to these debates. He is a deep reader of Kierkegaard's knotty and elusive texts, and does not take refuge in simplistic or reductive readings. He is able to present an overarching picture of Kierkegaard's work as negotiating the tensions between the universal scope and demand of religious commitment, and the scandalous particularity of both individual existence and the claims of Christian faith in particular.

Connell is honest enough to present the relatively meagre pickings of Kierkegaard's direct engagement with non-Christian faiths. At a time when Hegel and others were making stumbling attempts to engage more fully with these traditions as expressions of at least partial truth, Kierkegaard often remained with stereotypes (and troubling ones at that, when it came to Judaism). His interest lay elsewhere: for example, the critique of Christendom as a form of paganism.

That said, Connell's work uncovers suggestive resources in the way in which Kierkegaard discussed the 'pagan' whose passionate intensity puts them in a truthful relationship to the infinite divine, even though they worship what appears to be an idol. Faith is, as Kierkegaard put it, 'existence-communication' – a passionate way of being, not a set of doctrines. The strongest part of the book is where Connell develops the notion of existential 'moods' as a creative Kierkegaardian method of understanding ways of being religious and approaching religious difference.

A little less successful is the inclusion of chapters on Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and a comparison of him with Confucius. Each chapter has fascinating insights, but the chapters do not feel integrated into the whole, and it was notable that each had previously been published elsewhere.

Overall, however, this is a valuable book. It shakes up the rather arid conventions of debating religious diversity, and affirms a lived openness to difference and commonality without downplaying divergent truth claims and particular commitments. It does not duck difficult interpretative issues (such as the claim made by some that Kierkegaard can be read as either a relativist or an apologist for religious fanaticism). Connell is a clear, engaging writer and does an excellent job of reading the texts carefully but constructively in relation to contemporary questions. I did not know that significant theological support for Danish far right nativism comes from a movement claiming a Kierkegaardian basis; he must be turning in his grave.

This book is to be recommended, not only for Kierkegaard scholars, but for those who are seeking a challenging perspective on the urgent issues tangled up with religion today.

Liverpool Hope University

Steven Shakespeare

P. Schmidt-Leukel and A. Nehring, eds., *Interreligious Comparisons in Religious Studies and Theology: Comparison Revisited*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. x, 228. Hb. £85. ISBN 978-1-4742-8513-1.

Comparative religion, especially within the discipline of religious studies, has been strongly criticised in recent decades. It has been accused, for instance, of an 'intellectual imperialism' (p. 36), which assumes commonalities across cultures that are, in reality, very different. In Gavin Flood's words in this volume, comparative religion, according to its critics, assumes 'a questionable human universalism' (p. 130) that has been utterly rejected by postmodernism with its scepticism towards abstract categories. Perry Schmidt-Leukel links this with a move from phenomenology within religious studies to social and cultural analysis (pp. 204–5).

This volume seeks to rehabilitate or redeem 'trans-religious comparisons' (p. 4) in the light of this criticism and does so quite successfully. To take four examples, Michael Bergunder argues that the 'crisis of comparative religion [...] is first and foremost a crisis of the theoretical justification of religious studies in general' (p. 35). He examines the postmodern critique and argues for the necessity for comparisons to be historically contextualised rather than jettisoned. His approach, therefore, is to utilise the critique of comparative method to improve comparative method. Oliver Freiberger, on the other hand, seeks a methodological framework for the improvement of comparative studies, suggesting that the illuminative mode, which may lead to 'reciprocal illumination', and the taxonomic mode, through which religious items are classified systematically, are perhaps most promising (p. 63).

Kenneth Rose moves beyond theory to the rehabilitation of scholars who have been silenced in contemporary religious studies because of their search for 'religious universals' or recurring religious patterns in the world's religions, with a particular focus on Mircea Eliade. Claiming that 'the preference of many scholars for the singular in religion no more invalidates the search for the shared in religion than the preference for one's own cat over one's neighbour's cat invalidates the use of the concept "cat"' (p. 111), he argues that religious studies has lost its way through its dismissal of such categories as the 'sacred', which was central to Eliade's work. Schmidt-Leukel, my last example, justifies comparison in religious studies through asserting that it is 'an essential part of human understanding' (p. 204), predicated on the fact that there are 'similarities and commonalities' across all human societies. Analysing the concept of 'reciprocal illumination', he offers a case study of Jesus Christ as Bodhisattva (a Buddha-to-be) as a possible contender for 'reciprocal illumination' for both Buddhists and Christians, through recognition of 'a strong affinity combined, at the same time, with serious challenges' (p. 214).

This edited collection contributes to an important academic debate. It certainly has an agenda – that of challenging some contemporary trends within the discipline of religious studies. The fact that the editors believe

the book to be necessary throws light on the acrimony in some European contexts between religious studies, comparative religion and theology. The editors are convinced that human understanding and enrichment can be furthered through studies that bring religions together using comparative method. It should be of interest to all who sense that the encounter between religions is central to human flourishing.

University of Birmingham

Elizabeth Harris

D. Y. Schumm and M. J. Stoltzfus, eds., *Disability and World Religions: An Introduction*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. Pp. xviii, 258. Hb. £43.50. ISBN 978-1-4813-0521-1.

Disability and World Religions, part of Baylor University Press's series 'Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability', supplies an exciting addition to scholarship at the intersections of religion and disability, especially in a field typically dominated by a Christian perspective. It is a collection of essays, edited by Darla Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus, that not only provides a unique textbook for academics, clergy and laypeople alike to engage the connections between disability studies and religious studies, but also advances creative and constructive proposals for contemporary faith communities. In addition, the volume makes a critical contribution to a notably underexplored area in interdisciplinary inquiry.

In their brief introduction to the collection, Schumm and Stoltzfus offer readers a concise review of contemporary frameworks related to disability, a particularly helpful feature for readers who are unfamiliar with the field of disability studies. The chapters that follow engage disability from the vantage point of the following religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, Islam, and indigenous traditions in the Western hemisphere. Each chapter provides readers with four key areas of content: first, an introductory description of the specific religious tradition, including its key themes, practices and teachings; second, the relevance of the religious tradition to communities concerned with the lived experience of disability as well as the academic field of disability studies; third, a highlighting of key interdisciplinary connections between

the religious tradition, disability and other relevant fields; and finally, a concluding constructive section on how religious practices emerging from the tradition might more carefully engage the perspectives and participation of people with disabilities.

The individual chapters range from more theoretical engagements of religious traditions as they relate to disability concerns (for example, Benjamin Lukey's fascinating discussion of teachings from Confucianism in conversation with contemporary bioethics), to the analysis and exploration of lived practices in contemporary religious communities. This latter approach is exemplified in Julia Watts Belser's chapter on Judaism and disability, particularly her exploration of the alternative avenues of ritual participation among deaf Jews. In addition, the essays in this textbook offer pressing questions that challenge religious practitioners. For example, Mary Jo Iozzio's essay on Catholicism and disability frames the structural, attitudinal and technological barriers to access facing people with disabilities in the Roman Catholic Church as sources of sin. Iozzio identifies these ecclesial barriers as priority areas for disability justice advocacy and action.

Throughout this collection, the authors offer new engagements with primary sacred texts and stories emerging from their religious traditions. These insightful engagements typically intersect with broad and interesting themes: vulnerability, dependency, suffering, personhood, embodiment and constructs of health. While the editors and authors acknowledge the limited scope of single essays, and do not claim definitive authority within their conclusions, each chapter brings forth evocative sites for reflection. Throughout the textbook, readers will find a wealth of new interdisciplinary sources from fields including philosophy, theology and anthropology, from which they might continue their learning around questions concerning religion and disability.

With the exception of Vardit Rispler-Chaim who contributes a chapter on Islam and disability, the remaining authors and editors reside in the West (and primarily in North America). While this reality presents a slight weakness regarding the diversity of the collection's contributors, the authors each carefully attend to exploring the diversity of practices and teachings related to disability within particular religious traditions

themselves. This is especially compelling in Andrew Lambert's chapter engaging disability from the perspective of Daoism, with its orientation away from particularism and toward a pluralistic engagement in both theoretical and practical matters related to human embodiment.

Schumm and Stoltzfus contend that this volume will assist scholars and practitioners alike in creating new ways in which to engage the fields of disability studies and religious studies. In my reading, this collection more than exceeds the editors' goal: *Disability and World Religions* helps readers not only to expand their knowledge of issues at the intersections of disability and religion, but also creates space to imagine ways in which to resist discriminatory attitudes and practices that all too often remain commonplace in religious communities today.

Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI

Sarah Jean Barton

U. M. King, *Christ in All Things: Exploring Spirituality with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, 2nd edn. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. Pp. xxii, 234. Pb. £21.99. ISBN 978-1-62698-190-4.

First published in 1997, this book is a presentation of the French Jesuit priest and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin by one of his best-known advocates. In this revision, Ursula King draws on work published since then to extend her earlier treatment of the man, his oeuvre and its importance today.

From the mid-1920s, the Roman Catholic Church regarded Teilhard's theological writings as suspect because they re-interpreted some traditional dogmas, and he was forbidden from publishing them. Only after his death in 1955 were his texts published, beginning with *The Phenomenon of Man*, which addressed evolution. A scientific hermeneutic for Teilhard's oeuvre was thereby established. King, while attentive to this dimension of his project, focuses on the spirituality of 'one of the great mystics of the twentieth century' (p. 1).

Following an opening chapter on spirituality and Teilhard's place in it, four chapters follow on different aspects of his agenda. The first is structured around fire, which was one of his favourite images. Teilhard saw the universe aglow with Christ's presence. When excavating Peking

Man, he gathered evidence of the origins of humankind's ability to kindle fire. His war service as a stretcher bearer took place literally under fire. Teilhard was inspired by classic sacramentalism but, impelled by the Ignatian tradition of picturing the divine in the world, did not restrict Christ's presence locally. In her second substantive chapter, King discusses evolution. She rightly shows Teilhard to be a critical friend of modern science, wishing to re-integrate it with spirituality. Science should lead towards God rather than away from God. Nevertheless, it might be added that, for Teilhard, evolution called classic interpretations of some doctrines into question. For example, it suggested to him that the perfection represented by paradise was in the future rather than the past.

The next topic is Christ's presence in the universe. Developing the motifs of fire and evolution, King defends a cosmic christology of Christ as Omega, the point towards which evolution tends. She sees this speaking to the world today, detecting 'many signs of a renewed interest in spirituality, a growth in retreat houses and meditation groups, in the publication and reading of the spiritual classics, the spiritual masters, and mystics of all faiths' (pp. 112–13). However, from a Christian viewpoint, this reading of the times might be overly optimistic, with secularism a potent challenge. King next discusses mysticism-in-action, justly showing Teilhard's spirituality to be one of 'communion with God through the earth' (p. 125), in which inward impulses and outwardly-directed vision are integrated. The kind of social and political vision that this implies could be usefully specified: the contestation of technological and economic instrumentalism, the promotion of democracy sustained by complex networks of communities, and an acceptance of human finitude.

The remaining chapters address topics on which King might wish that Teilhard had made stronger positive statements. In the abstract, interfaith dialogue and even the merging of faiths might be presumed to be a corollary of the globally connected and convergent world that he promoted. However, Teilhard's metaphysics of convergence is grounded in the unifying action of Christ. His stated views of other religions and their social consequences are frequently disparaging, such as his assessment of Islam as stagnant, and his prediction that,

because of Buddhism, China would never modernise. King contends that dialogue presupposes secularity (p. 146), but this wasn't Teilhard's view; neither was he a straightforward universalist (p. 156). Ecology might be supposed to be another implication of his advocacy of global connectivity and holism. Yet Teilhard had high hopes that humanity would harness resources and technology to ever high levels to promote its spiritualisation. Even King recognises that he 'misjudged the continuous further availability of material and physical energy resources' and was 'far too optimistic' (p. 181). She then summarises Thomas Berry's critique of Teilhard on these and other grounds, such that it remains unclear how, if at all, Teilhard may be read ecologically.

The chapters, originating in different publications, are sometimes overlapping and repetitive. King passionately offers Teilhard's spirituality as responding to current predicaments. His metaphysical spirituality excites some of us, but others may require something more down to earth.

University of Edinburgh

David Grumett

T. J. Stead, *Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality: Making Space for God*. London: SPCK, 2016. Pp. xvi, 144. Pb. £9.99. ISBN 978-0-281-07486-0.

P. M. Tyler, *Christian Mindfulness: Theology and Practice*. London: SCM Press, 2018. Pp. xii, 177. Pb. £19.99. ISBN 978-0-334-05671-3.

'Mindfulness', wrote the Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, 'is at once simple and profound. When we are mindful and cultivate compassion in our daily lives, we diminish violence every day. We have a positive effect on our family, friends, and society [...] The practice of mindfulness is simply to bring awareness into each moment of our lives' (*Creating True Peace*, Rider, 2003, p. 5). That is easier said than done, as the authors of both these books point out. But we should note the aim: this ancient Buddhist practice is intended not to foster narcissistic self-absorption, but to develop a quality of compassionate attention which can help to heal the world. Both authors acknowledge their indebtedness to

the American molecular biologist Jon Kabat-Zinn, whose courses in the practice of mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School have achieved remarkable results in addressing a range of medical and psychiatric conditions. Both are writing not only to show how mindfulness can be reconciled with Christian theology and spirituality, but also to offer guidance in how to understand and practice it.

Peter Tyler's approach, as his subtitle implies, is the more overtly theological. Having briefly introduced both the origins and the contemporary practice of mindfulness, he sets it in the context of a number of different schools of spirituality – the desert fathers and mothers, the Spanish mystical tradition, Thomas Merton, and the Christian encounter with Indian tradition as exemplified in the work of Rabindranath Tagore and others. This approach works well, and Tyler is careful not to assume too glib an equivalence between religious concepts that were born in very different cultures. Occasionally, Tyler's text feels overloaded with more information than is needed: thus the material about the fifteenth-century Spanish abbot García de Cisneros (in chapter 3) refers to a number of relatively obscure late medieval writers (such as Hugh of Balma and Thomas Gallus) with no attempt to introduce them or explain their relevance: the result (especially on p. 42) reads more like notes for a university lecture than suitable material for this particular book. More seriously, the Dionysian tradition suddenly makes an appearance (p. 44) without any reference to Pseudo-Dionysius himself, who is then incorrectly described as 'St Dionysius' (p. 45). There are also some confusing discrepancies: Isaiah of Scetis's *Ascetical Discourses* (p. 21) turn into *Aesthetical Discourses* in the index (pp. 167 and 171); Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen appears un-introduced as Zutphen on page 42 and as Gérard Zerbolt de Zutphen in the index (p. 177); and the great French scholar Étienne Gilson (p. 96) becomes Étienne Gibson in the index (p. 170). This is a pity, as it could deter readers from persevering with what is an excellent book, full of wise reflections (the chapter on Merton is particularly good) and enriched by some practical exercises in a Christian form of mindfulness that are clearly and sensitively explained (although Tyler's exercise on breathing [p. 56] omits to mention that the Hebrew word *ruach* means 'wind', 'breath' and 'spirit').

Tim Stead's book is more modest in terms of academic scope but arguably offers a more accessible exploration of mindfulness. He draws on more biblical material than Tyler, and gives a fuller christological perspective (although his chapter on Jesus is all too short). He points out the counterintuitive nature of mindfulness – it's not easy to become aware of ourselves and of the world without analysing or judging (p. 7). But he shows how a deeper awareness leads to a deeper inner freedom: 'freedom is perhaps not just about doing what you like, but about being free to be who we are called to be' (p. 57). Like Tyler, he includes a number of exercises (the famous raisin exercise appears in both books), and his account of his own spiritual journey, leading up to his present work as an Anglican parish priest and teacher of mindfulness, comes across as both honest and moving. His argument that the Holy Spirit works both in the individual and in the life of the Church by *de-centring* us, so that growth in mindful awareness does not mean increased self-absorption but precisely the opposite, fits well with Christ's command to lose one's life in order to find it (pp. 65–8).

Both books beg two further questions. First, should Christians draw on other, quite different, religions and cultures in the service of a distinctively Christ-centred spirituality? Neither author cites Augustine's emphatically positive answer to this question: citing the passage in Exodus (12.35–6) which describes the departing Israelites carrying with them treasures which they had plundered from the Egyptians, Augustine argued that this justifies Christians quarrying other spiritual and cultural traditions in order to learn from, and appropriate, the riches that they contain (*De Doctrina Christiana* 2.58–63). Second, what should be the defining content of a properly Christian approach to mindfulness? Both authors respond similarly, though neither quite achieves the eloquence of an earlier writer whose classic study of prayer is arguably all about mindfulness *avant la lettre*:

It is one of the most moving experiences of life to watch a bewildered frightened human being, starved of friendship and hardly daring to be expectant of it, blossom out into a happy, trustful and confident personal life as the result of being [...] welcomed and received. It is of the essence of the Gospel that we are so received in Christ, that his Yes to [men and women] is pronounced

in such directly personal terms [...] We in our learning to say Yes to God are required to approach each other as apprentices to the mystery of personal recognition, to take infinite trouble to grow into it, and to know within ourselves the transfiguring outcome of being sought out and known in this way [...] Before ever words are spoken, and beyond any words that may be uttered, those included in it know that they are loved. (Alan Ecclestone, *Yes to God*, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975, p. 116)

Kirkcudbright

Gordon Mursell

S. A. Cherry, *The Dark Side of the Soul: An Insider's Guide to the Web of Sin*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. xii, 265. Pb. £16.99. ISBN 978-1-4729-0081-4.

On the cover of Stephen Cherry's book is a venomous lemon-gold snake, at the same time beautiful and repulsive. It stands as a symbol of how we human beings are both attracted and revolted by the dark side of human nature. The author begins from the position that human beings are neither inherently wicked nor virtuous. The behaviours that in the Christian tradition we have come to call sinful have deep roots, some of which at least are connected to survival and well-being. So, dealing with our more vicious instincts is a problem as much today as it has ever been.

Cherry is one of a number of contemporary writers to give attention to the idea of sin. Like others, he recognises that there is an itch which needs to be scratched: we know that there is something wrong with us but do not know how to engage with it. So he attempts, again, as others have, to bring together psychology, theology, sociology and science in a fairly breezy analysis of the behaviours and attitudes which Christianity has regarded as sinful. His starting point is that vice and virtue are not simply alternatives. There is an Aristotelian mean to be discerned. Vices are symptoms of disorder, but they also have potential for transformation. Self-awareness is key.

This is a conversational book, and best read in short chunks. I found it hard to trace an argument as such; it is rather a series of reflections and comments around the central theme. Cherry traces the idea of evil

thoughts back to the fourth-century monk and theologian, Evagrius, but then elaborates, modernises and re-classifies them in ways which sometimes illuminate and sometimes obscure. He is at his weakest when attempting to interpret Christian antiquity, falling into a patronising tone ('Evagrius himself had a bit of a temper', p. 188) which I found quite grating, given that this subtle and discriminating guide to evil thoughts is introduced without much in the way of context or background and is hardly allowed to speak for himself. Cherry is keen to make clear that this is not an academic treatise but a practical guide to living well in spite of (or because of?) aspects of our inner life which can lead us into destructive and self-destructive behaviour. All that is fine, of course, but at times Cherry falls into the theological liberal's trap of always being superior to history (they did their best, but we know best). It is a way of patronising the past which does not allow us to learn from our forebears.

That is not to deny that Cherry's book is an enjoyable read with some genuinely interesting and original insights. I particularly valued his treatment of snobbery, here a kind of vanity or vainglory, re-classified under what he calls 'vicious regards'. This includes the kind of virtue signalling which has become so endemic and debilitating today; the self-righteousness that refuses to recognise the small but sometimes lethal prejudices which we all harbour within ourselves. His treatment of anger and the pleasures of revenge were also useful, particularly his observation of how energised individuals become when events have made them angry. There is, indeed, a pleasure in wrath. At other times, Cherry's observations seem wide of the mark. Do soldiers deface their dead victims out of pride, as he suggests? More often, I would suggest, it is to hide the humanity of those whom they have robbed of life.

The conclusion to Cherry's observations is that sin is unavoidable. But, with Julian of Norwich, he does not see this as reason to despair. Sin is 'behovely'. But all shall be well.

Portsmouth

Angela Tilby

R. D. Harries, *The Beauty and the Horror*. London: SPCK, 2016. Pp. viii, 240. Hb. £19.99. ISBN 978-0-281-07693-2.

SPCK have done Richard Harries proud in the production of this book – it is beautifully bound and printed. He in turn has in effect sketched his own intellectual biography while presenting a wide-ranging exploration of perspectives on the interplay of beauty and horror, hope and despair (p. 211), working his way to prompting ‘hope that survives the destruction of all earthly hopes’ (p. 214). He values and takes seriously the perspective of those who do not, in the end, embrace an identifiably Christian worldview, but who, like him, want to match up the world as it is and the world as it ought to be. The work of the former chief rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, is of profound importance here, not least in the light of the abysmal history of Christian anti-Judaism, on which Harries himself published an invaluable book in 2003 (*After the Evil*, Oxford University Press).

It is primarily the human world which is the focus of Harries’s preoccupations, and he belongs to the Donald MacKinnon school of thought which insists on the unconditional necessity for Christian believers both to attend to what is actually going on in the world that we inhabit and ruin, and also without sentimentality to attend to the truth or falsity of Christian claims. It is no surprise to find such claims associated with the work of Austin Farrer (cf. *The One Genius* [SPCK, 1987], Harries’s selection of the latter’s work), but refreshing also to find Harries appreciating both the unflinching courage of Simone Weil (notably pp. 175–85) and the novels of Marilynne Robinson. He sets his readers on many a trail to follow, given the sometimes tantalising references that he provides as he builds his case for hope and the determination that it may and indeed must inspire.

Of the eighteen chapters (some including summaries, and many with helpful sub-headings), it is essential to get to grips with one group of chapters carefully placed in the first part of the book. Thus chapter 3, ‘Knowing and Unknowing’, explains the place of ‘wordless waiting’ (p. 31) in a living religious tradition, and the significance of the ‘arts’, broadly speaking, essential for at least some appreciation of ‘the freshness,

meaning and vitality' of religious tradition (p. 29) – again, one of Harries's long-standing preoccupations. Chapter 4, 'Pursuing the Truth', yields a perspective on science and religion with Farrer's commendation of 'truth-seeking intelligence' (p. 51). Chapter 5, 'Truth in Its Beauty', commends the lure of truth, foundational in our time for public and political life, though Harries does not attempt to pursue the ephemeral miseries so characteristic of our present condition. It is worth recalling at this point that not only is he of the generation with first-hand military service following the Second World War, but that throughout his career, not least as a bishop in the Church of England, he has been conspicuous in his concern for political and social justice, which is in the hinterland of his writing in this present book.

Overcoming not simply self-inflicted miseries but the human capacity for inflicting misery on both non-human and human creatures requires scrupulous and honest attention, while Harries makes his case for the discovery of a 'faith-based way of living', trusting both that 'there is a wise and good purpose behind our life' and that this good purpose will be 'fully known and vindicated' (p. 214).

St Andrews

Ann Loades

M. C. Moschella, *Caring for Joy: Narrative, Theology, and Practice*. Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2016. Pp. xvi, 303. Pb. €56. ISBN 978-90-04-32499-2.

This book commendably explores a complex and diffuse subject with sensitivity and breadth. There are easier subjects than joy to explore theologically, and certainly easier ones to explore practically and sociologically. Even if one is seeking not to be prescriptive (although Moschella is), discerning a particular definition of joy is risky. It may neglect accounts of suffering and pain and put joy on too high a pedestal; a goal in life for which not everyone can strive. Moschella, following a note of Henri Nouwen that the opposite of joy is not realism, but cynicism, argues that joy can and should embrace our vulnerable, embodied human condition and that, informed by it, joy can transform it.

Moschella aims to illustrate this by focusing on particular people, their relationship to care, and the joy afforded by that. The book argues that joy is found in outward relationships in which we embrace our vulnerability and embodied existence, and that joy further facilitates that outward movement. Joy is, essentially, a relational concept. The first section explores emotional and scientific accounts of joy and how they are effected in us. While interesting, this is not clearly linked to the theological account put forward. The second section focuses on three exemplars of joy through their ministerial engagement: Heidi Neumark at Transfiguration Lutheran Church, Henri Nouwen largely in relation to L'Arche Daybreak, and Gregory Boyle's Homeboy Ministries. The third section takes a different tack and looks at the examples of two people for whom, in a considerable struggle for justice and advocacy on behalf of the poor and oppressed, there is not much explicit joy: Pauli Murray's activism and groundbreaking path to her legal and later priestly career; and Paul Farmer's work, informed by liberation theology, in healthcare as partnership. The main strand which unites these five thinkers is that they sought to care for and nurture those who were in need in various different ways, and were receptive to, and learnt from, their experiences.

This leads to an account of joy which is focused on response and resistance to suffering and injustice, combating those ills with a constructive theology informed by hope and action. The book ends with a more prescriptive call to use narrative therapy – re-telling or re-authoring stories in a particular manner to avoid or challenge narratives that lead to despair. This practice of narrative pastoral care and conversation can help 'place' people and provide meaning and control.

As an unrepentant philosophical theologian, I cannot speak to the practical outworkings or sociological scope of the work, although I was interested at various points in Moschella's equivocation on the question of privilege. Moschella seeks to apologise for her and her examples' privilege, but, as seen pertinently in the work of Pauli Murray and Paul Farmer in different ways, the possession of that is not necessarily an ill, and Murray's drive and work in fighting to be recognised make the move to apologise for it appear as another unacknowledged form of privilege.

The second point is a more theological one. In the lives of joy presented as examples, joy is task-orientated, at times draining and frenetic. While Moschella speaks of joy as a gift, it seems to be more a matter of work and discipline. Theologically, there is a sense that joy is found in rest and fulfilment; the work of Kierkegaard, for example, evinces a joy found in rest and peace. Moschella's is a thicker account – pertinent and practical, interesting and informative – of joy that engages with the injustice and suffering that pervades the world. However, it also appears quite exhausting.

Liverpool Hope University

Deborah Casewell

J. M. Bryan, *Human Being: Insights from Psychology and the Christian Faith*. London: SCM Press, 2016. Pp. x, 270. Pb. £25. ISBN 978-0-334-04924-1.

This book is an attempt to draw together into dialogue insights on what it means to be a human being, and the implications for theology and ministry. If you are looking for a comprehensive overview of the potential relationships between psychology and theology, then this is the wrong book. No single book comes close to doing that, though Fraser Watts's recent *Psychology, Religion and Spirituality* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) is highly valuable.

To criticise Jocelyn Bryan's book for this would, however, be mistaken. She explicitly does not intend a comprehensive overview of the field. Rather, this book attempts a detailed critical discussion around a single organising concept: that of narrative, or how story is constitutive of our identities – a concept that has strong pedigree in theology, scripture and psychology.

Bryan uses the work of Dan McAdams and others who have written widely about narrative identity. This theory holds that we form our identity by an active process of integrating our life experiences into an ongoing story that is associated with well-being and meaning in our lives. Early on, Bryan relates this to the story of personal vocation and keeps up this theme. 'God has called every human being who he has created to participate in their own unique way in his loving purposes' (p. 4).

The anthropology which results is dynamic and has some useful implications. First, it enables us to take a life-course approach to vocation, Christian identity, discipleship and relationship with God and others. Second, it points to the need to integrate our identity as work. That resonates strongly with the idea that Christian life is a work in progress as well as many psychological insights. Its application to work with young LGBT people, for example, where many psychological models talk about the need to develop a sense of self, and accept oneself as wonderfully wrought, is potentially strong. Third, it enables a conversation which integrates insights from theology and psychology. Bryan's chapter on personality places a variety of different insights in context and the chapter on self-regulation creates room for a narrative of personal and interpersonal discipline (regular attention to the work of balance in our living, which helps us to become the best person that we can be), which is sometimes currently regarded as unfashionable.

Narrative work has developed a firm following among some psychologists and pastoral practitioners, from work among people with long-term conditions to survivors of bereavement by suicide and marginalised populations, especially more recently refugee and asylum-seeking communities. Yet to my mind, Bryan adopts McAdams too uncritically. Despite the insistence on social being, her model feels too atomistic and individualist, and a little too reductionist, despite herself criticising the reductionism of psychology. She doesn't really account for criticisms of the limits of narrative identity psychology as a method, nor the criticism that our narratives of ourselves are often not very accurate and hence not very reliable. That remains a problem – especially for ethical decision-making – which Bryan doesn't adequately address.

A further problem with this approach is the risk of inescapable subjectivity, which is fine for some epistemological viewpoints but not for others. If subjective personal story is the organising principle behind life, understanding and relationship with God, how can we be assured that any of this is authentic and not delusion? How do we develop any kind of basis on which to compare narratives and come to anything such as shared standards of moral expectation? To be fair, Bryan does provide a chapter on social being but this is focused on parenting, relationships

and shared experiences. There is little about the implications for the Church as a community of her model.

Negotiating the worlds of psychology, theology and pastoral practice remains fiendishly challenging. Even if one manages to avoid uncritical assumption of psychological models or uncritical supremacy of theological models, the hermeneutical and epistemological challenges of how to relate different paradigms can derail the best of work. But this book shows that a sustained conversation with some shared starting principles has value, even if it breaks down for some of us and leaves as many questions as answers.

This is one take on dialoguing psychology and theology. It would be a mistake if it were not on the reading list for those new to the field. It would be an equal mistake if it were the only text on that list.

University of Hertfordshire

Jim McManus

S. M. Barr, *The Believing Scientist: Essays on Science and Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016. Pp. vi, 226. Pb. £16.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-7370-5.

A. E. McGrath, *Enriching Our Vision of Reality: Theology and the Natural Sciences in Dialogue*. London: SPCK, 2016. Pp. xii, 215. Pb. £10.99. ISBN 978-0-281-07544-7.

Stephen Barr is an American Roman Catholic professor of theoretical particle physics: his earlier book *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003) is a useful contribution to the field of science and religion. *The Believing Scientist* brings together a variety of short essays, lectures, book reviews and blog posts which showcase his readable style and gift for helpful analogy in explaining complex scientific matters.

The essays are divided into sections: lengthy ones covering evolution, mind and soul, and the Big Bang and creation, and shorter ones looking at reductionism, science as a substitute for religion, finding God through science, and 'mischievous myths about scientific revolutionaries' (p. 201). There is a heterogeneous feel to the book, due not just to this wide

range of topics but also to each essay being an 'occasional piece', adopting a style and tone appropriate to its original context. Thus there are lectures, explaining particular scientific ideas and/or pointing out that they do not bear the anti-religious interpretations sometimes given to them. There are book reviews which deal (often very entertainingly) with a number of bestsellers which bear on themes in science and religion. There are topical pieces, such as an essay addressing Cardinal Schönborn's attack on neo-Darwinism of 2005. In many of these essays, Barr shows himself to be an articulate and extremely well-informed Catholic apologist.

A collection like this inevitably has strong and weak points. On the plus side, one sees the development of an author's thinking, evidenced here by the way in which Barr initially gives a cautious welcome to the idea of intelligent design (in his review of Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*, Simon and Schuster, 1996) before repudiating the movement to which it gave rise on the grounds that 'Its main consequence has been to strengthen the general perception that science and religion are at war' (p. 72). On the minus side, there is a good deal of repetition of material: the same quotation from Hermann Weyl appears on pages 19 and 83, quotations from Wigner and Crick similarly pop up more than once, and Barr repeats his own analogies (for example, that of God as an author, in chapters 16 and 17).

This is, perhaps, an ideal book for the bedside table: one to pick up and put down again, rather than ingest in large helpings. There are certainly many bite-sized chunks to relish: I particularly enjoyed a number of Barr's book reviews, covering as they do works by such writers as Stephen Jay Gould, Stephen Hawking, Francis Collins, Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers; and his splendid put-downs of Dawkins's *A Devil's Chaplain* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003) and *Unweaving the Rainbow* (Penguin, 2006) (the latter being memorably described as 'a 300-page non sequitur', p. 186) are in the same league as Terry Eagleton's celebrated demolition of *The God Delusion* (Black Swan, 2006) in the *London Review of Books*.

As Alister McGrath explains, *Enriching Our Vision of Reality* is not 'an academic book aimed at professionals already immersed in the field

of science and theology [...] My anticipated readership is much wider, embracing scientists with an interest in theology and theologians aware of the importance of the natural sciences' (p. viii). It is, effectively, a collection of essays; and its generally relaxed style means that it should accomplish its author's intentions very well.

After a scene-setting introduction, there are three chapters on individuals who have shaped McGrath's thinking and the field of science and religion more generally: Charles Coulson, Thomas Torrance and John Polkinghorne. The inclusion of the first of these, on whom at present there is surprisingly little secondary literature, is especially welcome. There follow six essays examining 'parallel conversations' in the discipline, looking at such questions as the relationship between theory and imagination, the place of faith in science and religion, human identity, and the future of natural theology in the academy. The heart of the book and its central message lie in the last of these topics: 'A Christian natural theology', writes McGrath, 'offers a powerful and persuasive critique of scientism, both challenging its desiccated and superficial account of the world of nature and setting out a richer and deeper vision of the natural order' (p. 175).

There is little in the latter part of the book that is radically novel, but McGrath is a sure guide through the issues that he explores, and draws on an impressively wide range of material in a book of this length. The readership at which he aims will be well-served by the summaries of the issues which he provides. In addition, there are frequent snippets of autobiography as McGrath describes his own journey from atheism to Christianity; and although this leads to some repetition, it adds an engaging personal touch to his prose.

In his preface, McGrath urges that the best defence of religion against the attacks of 'new atheist' opponents is afforded by informed individuals who are able to integrate the insights of science and religion, rather than perpetuating the myth that the two are antagonistic towards one another. As he puts it, 'In our postmodern culture, embodiment trumps argument' (p. ix). Given the sterility of much current debate between science and religion, this observation is surely spot on: it is the quiet affirmation of well-informed individuals which has the power

to overcome the shrill arguments of those selling the conflict myth. McGrath's book is a valuable step in enabling sympathetic people with backgrounds in either science or religion better to integrate, and personally to embody, the insights of both.

University of Edinburgh

Michael Fuller

A. E. McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Sceptics Find Faith*. London: SPCK, 2016. Pp. 197. Pb. £9.99. ISBN 978-0-281-07510-2.

Alister McGrath is probably the most prominent of British apologists, and an enthusiast for, as well as a scholar of, the last century's most renowned apologist, C. S. Lewis, as indeed the title of this book indicates. The book, across the pages of which the shadow of Lewis frequently falls, is offered as a 'how to' (and sometimes 'how not to') guide for those who find themselves engaging, or wanting to engage, in apologetics.

Although McGrath stresses that the bare rationalist approach of the Enlightenment will fail to work in contemporary culture, and that the present-day apologist needs also to appeal to wonder, imagination and narrative, he is nonetheless most at home in reasoned arguments. A number of his other books take up in particular the issues involved in relating science and faith, and that emphasis is well reflected in the content of this book.

While, in support of those reasoned arguments, McGrath draws on personal story, there is rather less of what it might mean to appeal to the imagination. Then again, rather than including creative and artistic approaches to faith within apologetics as McGrath appears to do, I see them as more open-ended and exploratory than attempting to demonstrate the reasonableness of particular beliefs.

There is also another function of reasoned apologetics, to which McGrath might have given more weight (although it is present): probing the rationality of other systems of belief and suggesting that they may be less rigorous and adequate than their promoters claim. He might also have included rather more on the importance of relationships in

the commending of faith, and the potential contexts for conversations over reasonable belief. Some of his primary examples come from formal settings in which he is the guest speaker; readers are perhaps less likely to find themselves in such contexts.

McGrath's overall approach is to set things in the context of late modernity before beginning to explore the biblical and theological basis for apologetics, and outlining areas that he believes have particular traction. He ends with some worked examples. Along the way, he dismisses in a couple of different sections the canned 'Q & A' approach that seems to be deployed on some American campuses. It is, I assume, the broadly conservative American audience that causes him to present Peter's and Paul's speeches in Acts as historical examples of contextually appropriate apologetics, with no real attention to Luke's literary artifice.

The book is a British re-publication of one published in the USA in 2012. I would surmise that at least some of its chapters originate in talks given to student audiences in that country, which might account for the impression both of repetitiveness and unevenness between the different chapters. Nonetheless, for someone beginning to think about what is involved in apologetics, it offers a useful overview. McGrath is also helpful in his emphases that apologetics is about a reasoned case, not a knock-down argument, that listening to the other needs to be respectful, and that responses should be genuine, appropriate and specific.

Diocese of Worcester

Doug Chaplin

D. M. Doyle, *What is Christianity? A Dynamic Introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016. Pp. xiv, 305. Pb. £21.99. ISBN 978-0-8091-4993-3.

This textbook is designed to introduce first-year undergraduates to Christianity. The introduction describes Doyle's academic approach and summarises interfaith issues. There are then four main sections: scripture, tradition, sacraments and Christian life. At each stage, the reader is provided with basic information and summaries of different viewpoints. The reasons for contrasting views are briefly described.

The author's opinion is not pushed – for example, on the ordination of women (p. 212) and same-sex partnerships (pp. 216–18). Each chapter ends with questions for reflection, a reading list, a glossary and notes. It is not a 'dynamic introduction', as the subtitle suggests. On the contrary, it is a systematic, well-ordered summary of main issues, showing that the author understands what first-year undergraduates need.

The author is an American Roman Catholic, and it feels like it. However, the book aims at an ecumenical readership, and largely succeeds. An exception is the section on the sacraments, although I liked the chapter on 'sacramental consciousness' (pp. 163–79). There are statements with which readers of *Modern Believing* will disagree. 'Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God' (p. 21). Eternal salvation may belong only to the baptised, or perhaps to those who explicitly accept Christ (p. 194). On the whole, though, Doyle is careful not to press a particular line.

Unfortunately, the book has a dated feel. Apart from references to later books, it could have been written 50 years ago. The four-source hypothesis of the Pentateuch seems to be taken for granted (p. 46). The doctrine of original sin is attributed to Paul (p. 53). The eucharist is described as a continuation of the passover (pp. 55–8). The theologies of New Testament authors are harmonised (pp. 68–73); disagreements are attributed to a later age (p. 111). The popular evangelical revival of the last 40 years is ignored, though maybe this is a wise choice as it may turn out to have contributed very little of substance.

More seriously, Doyle fails to mention recent biblical scholarship that sets the Torah, the prophets and Jesus within their political and economic contexts. Eventually, when we get to the fourth century, we are introduced to the condemnations of the rich by Bishops Ambrose, Chrysostom and Basil. Basil is quoted:

The bread which you keep, belongs to the hungry; that coat which you preserve in your wardrobe, to the naked; those shoes which are rotting in your possession, to the shoeless; that gold which you have hidden in the ground, to the needy. Wherefore, as often as you were able to help others, and refused, so often did you do them wrong. (p. 279)

This will be a bolt out of the blue to an eighteen-year-old undergraduate who has plodded almost all the way through the book without being given any hint that the Bible is full of such sentiments.

Having said this, the book is well organised, easy to read and full of suggestions for reflection and further study. I can imagine first-year undergraduates finding it an invaluable introduction to the range of issues behind the diverse versions of Christianity that we have today.

Liverpool

Jonathan Clatworthy

J. Vanier, *Life's Great Questions*. London: SPCK, 2016. Pp. xvi, 172. Pb. £9.99. ISBN 978-0-281-07595-9.

Sometimes one comes across a book that is life-transforming and will not end up sooner or later in the nearest charity shop. *Life's Great Questions* by Jean Vanier, who died earlier this year, is such a book. There are sixteen chapters, each of them addressing one of 'life's great questions', all of them inter-related. They range from the problem of suffering and evil and the existence of God, to the nature of love and the purpose of life. For those who knew Vanier well, it will read like a valedictory message. For others, it will capture the essence not only of his life and teaching, but of a uniquely holy person.

Vanier is concerned with freedom, freedom to be fully human in God and in community. The book draws us into this overarching idea in a matrix of delicately woven threads of wisdom. Vanier writes about the essential creativity which lies in the heart of every human person. This he calls 'conscience', the place where we know and are known by God.

Closely related to this mutual knowing of God are ideas. They come when we are least restricted by the impedimenta and distractions which our public persona often requires of us. As with the blind man at the pool of Siloam (John 9.7), ideas come when we are willing to question and vulnerable to being questioned. 'We must not walk away from our paradoxical experiences, but accept them and seek to situate them in a more truthful understanding of the world' (p. 4).

Vanier's core task is to enable people to know how much they are loved by God. He does this by eliciting questions, so that the reader

can learn the hard but necessary lesson of self-surrender which love requires. Surrender and the breaking-down of barriers are key to Vanier's thinking, since it is the barriers constructed within ourselves and between one another that create division and obscure what he calls 'reality'.

Reality is the truth about a person, whoever they are, beginning with those whom society has written off. It is the truth about the enemy, the person whose presence we shun, who elicits only feelings of hatred and hurt and whose real humanity we find it hard to contemplate. Reality is the truth about the person who hides behind the face of the terrorist, and for whom we are asked to have compassion. Their real humanity lies hidden, as does our own, much of the time: this book offers us a way out of the corners into which we paint ourselves when we refuse to acknowledge the truth about ourselves, the truth that we are profoundly loved.

The acceptance of truth involves loss, a paring away of what is false and destructive in ourselves so that we can better face our own pain and the pain of others. Vanier repeatedly describes this sense of loss as 'anguish'. Anguish occurs in every moment of humiliation, when we experience what he calls 'the stifling of our deepest identity' (p. 50). He legitimises our anguish as we remember such moments. His treatment of anguish also touches on the innate loneliness of the human condition, as he himself did with the poor and the marginalised. His life, and the L'Arche Communities that he founded, taught him the truth of a great paradox, that it is in caring for the marginalised that we begin to learn how beloved we are, how worthy we are in God's eyes. 'To be human is to love and to be loved. We are *fundamentally beloved*' (p. 52, Vanier's emphasis).

The few threads that I have picked out re-appear throughout this book as Vanier uses them to trace a picture of what it means to be fully human, to heal divisions in ourselves and in our relationships. We sense our barriers being dismantled even as we read. In this his last book, Vanier bequeaths a rich and timely legacy to us all.

Abergavenny

Lorraine Cavanagh

K. E. Lassiter, *Recognizing Other Subjects: Feminist Pastoral Theology and the Challenge of Identity*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2016. Pp. x, 188. Pb. £17. ISBN 978-0-7188-9446-7.

This spiritual and emotive book moves us to reconsider ways in which we 'recognise' the 'Other' (p. 6); it is a theological account that critically analyses the importance of recognising subjects – even the 'wildness' (p. 167) of subjects. In particular, it successfully highlights the need for feminist pastoral theology to work more with guidelines of 'recognition'. Lassiter encourages feminist pastoral (and all) theologians to re-imagine the concept of the 'self-in-relation', inviting them to recognise those whom they may have 'mis-recognised' or those in 'non-recognition' (pp. 15–16). In support of these labels, Lassiter provides personal and honest examples from her own experience, building trust with readers who find themselves falling under one of her categories (pp. 2–4). She also provides narratives of other subjects who have struggled to be recognised for who they are, addressing frameworks that, for example, inadequately account for complex transgender subjectivity (p. 14). Lassiter challenges us to realise how and when distorted expressions of recognition of other subjects lead to domination and submission, which she urges must be actively resisted (p. 172).

I found chapter 5, 'Theological Recognition', which focused predominantly on liberation theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid, to be the most thought-provoking. Lassiter draws elements of her theology of recognition from Althaus-Reid's radical 'queer' and 'indecent' theologies (pp. 106–9). Lassiter makes clear that her demand for all subjects to receive recognition, including 'non-normative' subjects, has many correlations with Althaus-Reid's attention to 'non-heteronormative bodies' (p. 113). In her conversation with Althaus-Reid, Lassiter identifies that even the subjugated bodies which liberation theology seeks to save are in fact still not fully recognised for who they are: 'In failing to attend to sexuality and gender, liberation theology reproduces the colonial project of domination, marginalization, and exploitation' (p. 112). 'Theological exploitation' (p. 117) occurs when theologies (including liberation theologies) mis-recognise subjects or dismiss them altogether.

The application of Althaus-Reid's radical liberation theology 'urges us to re-think the geographies of holiness' and controversially probes us to look to a 'dis-robed' and 'exposed' God, which may broaden our recognition of other subjects past the limits of 'normal' (p. 121). It is a helpful prompt for the Church today to recognise LGBTQI+ and other subjects outside of fixed, restrictive boundaries of identity, as Lassiter discusses in conversation with Judith Butler (pp. 82–106).

I would have liked to have seen Lassiter develop her motif of grace. In the concluding pages, she emphasises that recognising other subjects, especially those who have been neglected from this practice previously, can represent spiritual entry into 'a place of grace' (p. 175). This seems to me to be a significant and groundbreaking nuance in feminist pastoral theological literature. As we behold others 'not only in liturgical spaces, but in places where [we] encounter others both like [us] and not like [us]', so we, in turn, can be 'beheld' by grace (p. 175).

University of Chester

Sophie Witherstone

C. Beardsley and M. O'Brien, eds., *This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2016. Pp. xiv, 224. Pb. £14.99. ISBN 978-0-232-53206-7.

Anyone with young people in their life will know that we are in the midst of a massive cultural shift as rigid notions of binary gender – the 'two gender' model – finally unravel in favour of something more nuanced and flexible. In pastoral terms, this can be a bewildering challenge – particularly for those whose Christian tradition and theology remain untouched by reflection that can help to ground us and orientate us to change. I have lost count of the number of people who have disclosed to me, in the course of very 'ordinary' conversations when visiting parishes, that trans issues and other examples of gender variance are challenging their family and church life.

In a sense, then, this book cannot have come soon enough, and in many ways is long overdue. As with all pioneering collections, the chapters are varied in style. Some write from lived experience of being trans and/or intersex; others contribute as allies. Within a fortnight of

reading this book, I had cause to recommend chapter 9, Chris Dowd's 'Five Things Cis Folk Don't Know about Trans Folk Because It Isn't on Trashy TV: My Right of Reply'. If you read only seven pages, read these. Through his research, Dowd has spoken in depth with many trans Christians about their lives and faith, and distils his learning into this short input of wisdom.

It is clear from Dowd's contribution, and others throughout the book, how much damage can be wrought on a community through the dangerous activity of 'theologising about' a group of people without direct reference to them. When it comes to issues of gender and sexuality, this is sadly the norm rather than the exception. Two documents are referred to again and again: the Church of England's *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* (Church House Publishing, 2003) and the Evangelical Alliance's *Transsexuality* (Paternoster, 2000). Dowd says,

I completely believe that the Church stands as exposed as Job's friends on the issue of trans folk. By creating theology that does not reflect on the experiences of trans folk and take heed of those with professional knowledge working with them, the Church is not only being profoundly incurious but attempting to create theology based on assumptions, fears and prejudices that have little basis in reality. (pp. 106–7)

A fuller critique of chapter 7 of *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* is undertaken in chapter 6 of this book by Christina Beardsley ('Taking Issue: The Transsexual Hiatus in *Some Issues in Human Sexuality*').

In addition to such critiques of misguided theologising about transgender issues, there is material in this book that aims to resource discussions about gender which are more firmly rooted in the twenty-first century, for example, chapter 1, 'The Sibyl's Gender, Sexuality and Spirituality Workshop'. This, and other chapters, introduce themes of gender as socially constructed and as performative. There is also a common theme – explored through people's stories, and through analysis – of the mixed history of medical and scientific interventions in the lives of transgender people.

For me, though, the most powerful material is the personal stories – particularly as this book is, in many ways, playing 'catch up', putting

stories 'out there' that should have been listened to attentively and with respect, decades ago. The depth of pain and the complexity of spiritual growth emerge as a profound challenge to our notions of mission, discipleship and vocation. Michelle O'Brien's 'Intersex, Medicine, Diversity, Identity and Spirituality' (chapter 4) is particularly powerful. And her conclusion is this:

I have come to see walking a middle way between the sexes as my path. It is a path between two compulsory genders, another way, a narrow way, a difficult place, but the only place I can genuinely be. It is like living in a crack in the world from which comes a specific type of knowledge and power [...] Finding and being myself is like a religious calling, because this is how it was meant to be. This middle way between genders should sit comfortably within any spiritual path or discipline, drawing strength from both genders instead of just one. Not as a third, but as a path between genders, knowing gender is illusory, socially constructed. (p. 54)

Diocese of Oxford

Alison Webster

SHORT REVIEWS

A. P. Davison, *Amazing Love: Theology for Understanding Discipleship, Sexuality and Mission*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2016. Pp. xii, 113. £8.99. ISBN 978-0-232-53265-4.

This book, a copy of which was sent to all members of the Church of England's General Synod, packs plenty into its 100 pages, and it would be churlish to quibble about any lack of nuance that arises as a result. The authors are upfront about their convictions and assumptions, including the non-pathology of diversity in human sexual orientation, and the witness of biological and psychological sciences. They aim to disrupt the too-close association between sexual relationships and specific sexual acts – which, they note, seems to be a particular pitfall for Christians, as though the rest of a relationship in which sex happens (or doesn't happen) were insignificant. There is no need, they hold, for a distinctive theology of same-sex relationships: rather, 'We can rejoice in love between two women, or two men – simply because it's love' (p. 77). A large portion of their argument rests on the idea that, far from only conservative interpreters taking the Bible seriously, in fact 'none of us are, on the whole, taking the Bible seriously enough' (p. 38, original emphasis), given the need to honour the texts' own long and complex journey of inspiration, execution, transmission, redaction and interpretation – quite apart from the additional insights of tradition, experience and reason. They appeal to the missional damage done to young people in particular by the Church's apparent obstinacy, and insist on the importance of Christians who disagree in good faith finding better ways to co-exist. The book is a fresh, effective and accessible introduction to a sometimes hackneyed set of conversations, albeit provoking and tantalising in its brevity.

University of Exeter

Susannah Cornwall

E. T. Oakes, *A Theology of Grace in Six Controversies*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016. Pp. xxii, 248. Pb. £18.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-7320-0.

The Jesuit theologian Edward Oakes died in 2013, leaving a significant legacy of theological teaching and publication, and having done much to elucidate the thought of Hans Urs Von Balthasar in particular. In this, his final book, he offers six different but overlapping essays on disputes relating to the theology of grace. The opening chapter, on nature and grace, sets the tone for what is an erudite but accessible volume. It is followed by discussions of sin and justification, free will and predestination, evolution and original sin, experience and divinisation, and Mary as mediatrix of graces.

Oakes brings to these well-worn theological topics an enormous depth of learning combined with a fluency and lightness of touch which protects the book from the dryness that is so common to these themes. The range of material addressed is always impressive and no period of Christian history is ignored. There are detailed discussions of, among others, Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Molina, Scheeben, and de Lubac. A few of the historical and interpretative assumptions seem a little dated in contemporary discussion; some readers may find Oakes's view of Schleiermacher old-fashioned, for example, and his reading of Newman too trusting. But the breadth of the study is its strength, and the ability to bring so many major authors into dialogue is not to be sniffed at.

The theology of grace which this book proposes is far from comprehensive, and was never intended as such. It opens and invites conversations, and perceptively connects themes, authors and ideas across the whole of the Christian tradition. As a contribution to discussion, and especially as a resource for the exposition and elucidation of long-standing theological controversies, it is extremely welcome, and has much to offer both those well versed in these subjects and those coming to them for the first time.

Oxford

Peter Groves

R. M. Oxtoby, *The Trouble with Christianity: A Psychological Perspective*. Alresford: Christian Alternative Books, 2016. Pp. viii, 105. Pb. £9.99. ISBN 978-1-78535-289-8.

This is a quirky little book that would work well in the context of a discussion group in a church community that wishes to cultivate a critical attitude to matters of faith. The subtitle somewhat misrepresents the content: it is the fruit of a lifetime's grappling with religious belief, and Oxtoby undoubtedly has the ability to open up questions of theology for the construction of a religious practice fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Oxtoby's aim is to reject the image of God as a controlling, authoritarian force, suggesting in its place an alternative, humanist form of Christianity. His position resonates with the approach developed by Don Cupitt over the last 40 years. The chapter on 'What God Is Not' is most helpful for those who might not be trained in academic theology. Here, he sets out his reasoning for rejecting the God of theism, and the attitudes that would result from taking seriously a reverence for life and the ethical principles of Jesus.

At times, he is rather quick to dismiss alternative readings of the biblical language that he is at pains to reject. For example, the notion that God is a creator who 'sustains' the universe is rejected in one paragraph. At this point, it would have been good to consider some of the different ways in which that image could be read: and here the ideas of contemporary ecotheologians could valuably have been presented.

But this is a thought-provoking book that will spur many a debate. The appendix of wisdom that Oxtoby has accumulated over the years is a section which can be returned to again and again, for it opens up further areas to be pursued for the Christian who wishes to frame their faith through a humanist and humane lens.

Oxford Brookes University

Beverley Clack

R. A. Streett, *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century*. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2016. Pp. x, 327. Pb. £25. ISBN 978-0-227-17615-3.

This book is based on a PhD from the University of Wales, Lampeter, by an author already established as a college professor of practical theology in the Southern Baptist tradition. The thesis is that the corporate meals of the early Church were a form of subversive, non-violent resistance to the Roman empire, in that God was worshipped rather than the emperor, and that Christ's coming was anticipated, not only in sharing food and drink equitably, but in prophecy and worship. There is nothing problematic in this at all, in fact nothing that has not been well established in scholarship for a century. The author's appeal to recent studies of the Roman symposium as a template for early Christian worship, drawing on sources of diverse historical, geographical, and socio-economic origins, serves only to impose far too rigid a reconstruction of dining customs in the ancient world, in the observance of Jewish festivals, and in the early Church. Therefore, while a very welcome and long overdue wake-up call for Trump-worshipping conservative evangelicals of the Bible belt who sacralise patriarchy, racism and the widening disparity between rich and poor, the original contribution to scholarship is very modest – more a twist of the proverbial kaleidoscope than the radically new reading of scripture that this aspires to be.

Glasgow

Nicholas Taylor

J. W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017. Pp. xiv, 206. Pb. £16.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-7505-1.

In *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, Joshua Jipp deftly constructs a practical theology of hospitality for our time. The first main section, 'Divine Hospitality', lays out God's hospitality in scripture with particular attention to the mission of the early Church. The second section, 'Human Hospitality', addresses tribalism, xenophobia and economic greed, as Jipp argues for a renewed and radical practice of hospitality

in Christian life. This book is a solid starting place for anyone seeking to recover the rich tradition of hospitality in Christian scripture and history. It is written in a readable style, avoiding theological jargon, while maintaining substance. Each chapter includes study questions that invite deeper engagement with the issues presented.

Saint Paul School of Theology, Oklahoma City

Amy Oden

S. M. B. Wells, *Face to Face: Meeting Christ in Friend and Stranger*. London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2019. Pp. xii, 97. Pb. £12.99. ISBN 978-1-78622-129-2.

As Sam Wells acknowledges (p. ix), the main content of this book could have been written by any Christian minister reflecting on their experience: an account of twenty-one encounters drawn from the course of ministry, which taught Wells something and are offered here for others' learning. Some of them are very striking; all of them are at once both ordinary and extraordinary. Not every Christian minister, however, could have written the substantial introduction (pp. 1–26), both wise and profound, which distils priestly ministry in terms of the power of silence, the power of touch, and the power of words. 'What you *don't* do or say, [...] what you *do*, and [...] what you *say*' (p. 3, Wells's emphasis) includes the importance of not speaking too readily, handling the eucharistic elements as the most precious items imaginable, and realising the depth of routine priestly liturgy. Wells remarks that this introduction would be suitable to read, among other occasions, 'before one's twentieth anniversary' of ordination (p. x), which is precisely when I happened to read it. It is a gem of an essay in pastoral theology, and deserves to be widely read and often returned to.

Worcester Cathedral

Michael Brierley